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*General Editor—SIR HENRY NEWBOLT*

A BOOK OF RUSKIN

No. 65



RUSKIN AS A YOUNG MAN

*(From a pen-drawing by  
E. H. Thompson)*

# A BOOK OF RUSKIN

COMPILED AND EDITED BY  
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## PREFACE

THE arrangement and, to some extent, the choice of extracts in this little book are the outcome of personal experience in introducing the works of Ruskin to schoolgirls between thirteen and sixteen years of age. For them, and doubtless for many older students also, the best method of approach is the biographical, and the medium, *Præterita*; for to read *Præterita*, that autobiography written "frankly, garrulously, and at ease," is to learn to love the author, while enjoying the full flavour of his literary gifts. Though not a novel, *Præterita* has many of the qualities which go to make a fine novel—narrative power and astonishingly vivid portraiture included. The severely Evangelical mother with strong opinions on the sinfulness of toys, the still more Evangelical aunt who allowed only cold mutton for Sunday's dinner, the indulgent father who told him stories after the process of shaving was safely accomplished, the old nurse who *would* put her mistress's cup on the wrong side of the little round table, the little Scotch cousin who competed with him in the Sunday evening Scripture examinations, and his Scotch aunt with her uncanny gift of second sight and her prophetic dreams—these, and many more, Ruskin makes us know as well as any of the characters who live for us in the pages of Thackeray and Dickens.

With *Præterita* should be read the "Letters," which, with their intimate self-revelation and style infinitely

varied to suit the mood of the moment are not only delightful reading in themselves but throw a valuable sidelight upon Ruskin's inner life and upon his relations with the outstanding personalities of his time for Ruskin's correspondents included Alfred Tennyson Mr and Mrs Browning Thomas Carlyle Dr John Brown Henry Miss Mitford Mrs Gaskell Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his wife Edward Burne-Jones Sir Oliver Lodge Cardinal Manning and many others whose names are familiar to all educated people.

The biographical sketch with which this little volume opens is intended to supply a framework into which the extracts may be fitted and to suggest some lines upon which more extensive reading may be pursued. Ruskin's relations with the men and movements of his age and the prominent part he himself took in its æsthetic and social activities make a fascinating study which is also a survey of the nineteenth century in many of its aspects.

E. M. H.

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# A BOOK OF RUSKIN

## INTRODUCTION

THE only child of Scottish parents who were also first cousins, John Ruskin was born in London on February 8, 1819. The house, which has since been marked with a memorial tablet, is No. 54 Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, Bloomsbury—a rather ugly, flat-fronted building with a basement, a veranda to the first-floor windows, and a semi-circular fanlight over the front door. But it was not for long that the child remained in the dull if respectable surroundings of Brunswick Square. His father, John James Ruskin, was a prosperous wine merchant, head partner in the firm of Ruskin, Telford, and Domecq, a partnership to which Domecq contributed the sherry and Telford the capital, while Ruskin added brains and business energy to such good purpose that his means allowed an ample margin for the finer pleasures of life—pictures, books, and travel. When their little boy was between four and five years of age, the Ruskins moved to a pleasant house at Herne Hill, then quite a rural district, and there the child had a garden, which for him afforded all the joys of Eden, except that in *his* garden “all the fruit was forbidden.” In consequence of this restriction he very early decided that the seeds and fruits of the trees were “for the sake of the flowers, not the flowers for the fruit.” Many years after, when he was

growing old Ruskin wrote with loving remembrance of his Herne Hill garden. The first joy of the year being its snowdrops the second and cardinal one was in the almond blossom—every other garden and woodland gladness following from that in an unbroken order of kindling flower and shadowy leaf and for many and many a year to come—until indeed the whole of life became autumn to me—my chief prayer for the kindness of heaven in its flowerful seasons was that the frost might not touch the almond blossom.

Besides these happy times spent at home in his garden there were gladly anticipated holidays with his Croydon cousins by the springs of the Wandel with his Scottish cousins by the banks of the Tay and still more rapturous times of travel all over England with occasional visits to Scotland and Wales as well for Ruskin's father liked to call in person on his customers all over the country collecting orders for the coming year.

These annual journeys so delightfully combining business with pleasure were undertaken in Mr Telford's old fashioned travelling chariot roomy within and fitted with all sorts of fascinating devices for the convenience of those whose virtual home it became for several months. Horses were changed at picturesque country inns where the coach rattled over the cobbled courtyards to be greeted by shouts of

Horses out! and in emulation of the postilion with his cracking whip little John also riding inside the chariot with a silver mounted whip bought especially for his delectation would exercise it on papa's legs in a most efficient and professional manner. The tours were made in leisurely fashion and whenever opportunity offered to visit some famous cathedral castle or country mansion that opportunity was used in a spirit of appreciation untouched by envy, through which the child very early perceived that it was

"probably much happier to live in a small house and have Warwick Castle to be astonished at, than to live in Warwick Castle and have nothing to be astonished at."

In many of the country mansions thus visited by the Ruskins, there were splendid pictures, and "Papa," who was an excellent art critic, never failed to "pay the surliest housekeeper into patience" until he had examined them to his heart's content and pointed out their beauties to his small son John. In addition to his artistic gifts, Ruskin's father was a fine reader of both poetry and prose, and a devoted admirer of Sir Walter Scott. When, therefore, their way took them near any place mentioned by that famous writer, a well-worn volume would be read on the very spot where the incidents described were said to have occurred. Thus the boy Ruskin was very early led to associate his love of romance with his delight in natural scenery.

Up to his fifteenth year, except for one short journey to France and Belgium when Ruskin was only six, all the tours were made within Great Britain, but in 1833 a still more exciting trip was planned. They were looking at some pictures of wonderful places on the Rhine, when his mother suggested that they should go and see them in reality. So after due preparation they travelled by way of the Rhine into Switzerland, catching from Schaffhausen their first glimpse of the Alps—a sight that stirred Ruskin as nothing else had ever done. The boy had a passionate love of beauty, and those magical mountains, first seen in the rosy glow of sunset, were for him, as he says, the entrance into a new life. Henceforth, his most intense happiness was always to be found among the mountains, and a great part of his work in life was to interpret their beauty and their meaning to other men, so that they in turn might experience the same emotion.

Delightful journeys these, which pleasantly counter-

balanced whatever of rigour there was in Ruskin's upbringing for Ruskin's mother devoted as she was to her only child held what we should consider strange views on the education of children. Once when he was quite a baby and very anxious to touch the tea urn shining on the table she allowed him to burn his fingers so that he might learn from experience the value of obedience. Toys she regarded as sinful and the selections that follow give a fairly complete picture of a rather lonely little boy driven in default of other amusement to counting squares and comparing colours in the patterns of the carpets wallpapers and bed covers—a little boy who was summarily whipped if he cried did not do as he was bid or tumbled on the stairs. Such a régime might have harmed a duller mind but with Ruskin there is no doubt that his mother's methods rigorous though they were, did much to form those habits of fixed attention accurate observation and close analysis to which he largely owed his subsequent fame.

Until he was ten years old Ruskin's only teacher was his mother and the chief instrument in his education was the Bible. Their daily readings from the Bible began with the first chapter of Genesis went on to the last verse of the Apocalypse and were then resumed at the beginning of Genesis. Every word had to be pronounced correctly every sentence given its correct inflection again it is certain that with some children such a method of teaching would only have created a lifelong distaste for the Bible but Ruskin reckoned it the one essential part of his education. As his journeys hither and thither through the lovely places of the earth encouraged and fed the rapturous love of beauty with which he was naturally endowed, so his daily readings of the Bible educated that inborn feeling for the melody of words which was later to make him one of the great master musicians of our language. It could not in itself have given him the

ear, but the ear being there, the wonderful word-harmonies of the Bible were the best of all possible training ; and one can hardly over-estimate the influence which his mother's oral teaching, united to a natural gift, must have exercised on Ruskin's literary development. It certainly accounts for the great importance he always attached to the sound as well as to the sense, even of prose, much more of poetry.

One of Ruskin's most absorbing childish occupations was the composition of verse, a practice which was encouraged by his parents, who had some hope of their young genius uniting the dignified career of a bishop with the fame but not the conduct of a Byron. Little John's first poems were composed at the age of seven. One was called " The Needless Alarm," and began thus :

" Among the rushes lived a mouse  
with a pretty little house  
made of rushes tall and high  
that to the sky were heard to sigh."

Not bad for a seven-year-old poet ! But Ruskin soon did better than this, and though he never wrote anything that can be called great poetry, as he himself was most ready to admit, yet some of these early pieces are well worth reading. One of them, called " The Ileriad," is a rhyming account of his visit to the English Lakes with Papa, Mamma, and Cousin Mary, who had been adopted by his parents on the death of her mother, Ruskin's Aunt Jessie. The two children (Mary was fifteen and John was eleven) were mightily pleased to see the poet, Robert Southey, at Crowthwaite Church, one Sunday morning, though Mary's attention was distracted by the condition of the pew, for she wrote in her diary, " We were put into a seat that would have been a disgrace to any church, it was

so dirty Eleven year-old John records the incident with childish glee

And I what a shame were shown into a seat  
 With everything save what was wanted replete  
 And so dirty and greasy though many times dusted,  
 The ladies I thought I could never be trusted  
 First looking at seat and again upon a founce  
 And I sitting and gazing for fear of their gowns I  
 I think all the time they took such mighty care  
 They sat upon thorns and perhaps upon air I  
 However I forgive deed I scarcely did know it  
 For really we were cheek by jowl with the poet I

In addition to his constant practice in verse-writing the boy was now busy with more formal studies. Latin grammar he had begun with his mother then a classical tutor was found for him in the person of the Rev Dr Andrews pastor of Beresford Chapel Walworth the place of worship attended by the Ruskin family every Sunday morning In the afternoon John and Mary used to write out a short abstract of the sermon which was delivered from a wonderful three-decker pulpit with a big fat cushion for the preacher and a less fat one for the curate and a hard dry mean one for the clerk The fat cushion of crimson velvet with gold tassels was a great resource to the boy when he grew tired of listening to the sermon because he liked watching the rich colour of the folds and creases that came in it when the clergyman thumped it Dr Andrews proved an amusing teacher whose droll anecdotes and illustrations made his pupil laugh almost if not quite all the time It was good that Ruskin should learn in such a pleasant unlaborious fashion that the Greeks liked doves swallows and roses just as well as he did but his mother who shrewdly suspected a certain lack of thoroughness in these light hearted lessons was perhaps not altogether sorry when other duties compelled the Rev Dr



Andrews to resign his charge. He was succeeded by a certain Mr. Rowbotham, with whom Ruskin began to study mathematics and French. About this time, too, he was receiving regular lessons in drawing, so that the days were all too short for what he wished to do. Writing, reading, drawing, and the collection and study of minerals absorbed all his spare time, and in addition there were chapters of the Bible to learn for his mother, and verses to write for his father. No wonder that when bedtime came the young poet felt he had cause to protest.

"I wish Mamma a little less would load us  
With so much of *imperativus modus*."

Ruskin's interest in French received its first impetus from the continental tour already referred to, for the return journey was made through Paris, where his father's partner, Mr. Domecq, had a house in the Champs Elysées. There Ruskin first saw the brilliant and beautiful Adèle Domecq, with whom he was to fall hopelessly in love; and there also her sister, the little Elise, then just nine, pitying the tongue-tied, rather awkward English boy, came and prattled to him in her fluent French, giving him "the entire history of her school, and of the objectionable characters of her teachers, and of the delightful characters of her companions, and of the mischief she got into, and the surreptitious enjoyments they devised, and the joys of coming back to the Champs Elysées, and the general likeness of Paris to the Garden of Eden."

Fortunate in so many respects, Ruskin was throughout his life singularly unhappy in all affairs of the heart. This, his first love affair, was disastrous in its result, for Adèle, who was beautiful, gay, and altogether Parisienne, saw no genius (and probably it would have made no difference if she had) in the bourgeois English boy, so unused to the society of young

ladies that he adopted the very worst means of commending himself to his mistress. Mrs. Ruskin too, always the ruling power in the household, disapproved of the whole business, and took herself the chief person concerned, treated the affair as a huge joke.

As an old man, Ruskin was able to write of the incident in terms of delicious self-railery. But at the time the disappointment had a most damaging effect upon his health. Some distraction was afforded by the beginning of his University career, but the news of Adèle's marriage in 1840, combined with overwork for the brilliant degree he was expected to take at Oxford, brought about a breakdown so serious that the taking of his degree had to be postponed while he went abroad seeking health. Very glad to escape from the routine of Oxford life to his beloved sketch books and d'vies again.

Oxford never roused in John Ruskin that worshipful rapture of affection which is felt by so many of her sons, for to tell the truth he was but ill prepared for the studies of a place like Oxford. His early education, by private tutors and at private school, much interrupted by illness and by frequent travelling, had not laid that foundation which is required for academic distinction. His wonderful powers of concentration and analysis could only be fully exercised on those subjects which interested him, and there seemed little place in the Oxford of those days for the study of Nature and Art. At this stage of his life Ruskin was not interested in the grammatical niceties of dead languages, and he was interested in so many other things that were practically ignored at Oxford. His one great University success was the winning of the Newdigate Prize for a poem entitled *Salsette and Elephanta*. \* but such work as he himself saw afterwards was a great waste of time. Yet Ruskin's

\* Islands lying off Bombay. \* the remains of cave-temples sacred to Hindu deities.

poetical efforts, if they taught him nothing else, showed him his limitations, and it may at least be argued that they helped to develop his natural fastidiousness in the choice of epithet and the skill of phrasing which make his prose so wonderful.

It was during his enforced absence from Oxford that Ruskin and his parents, being in Rome, met Mr. Joseph Severn, the friend of the dead poet Keats. The old people took to Mr. Severn from the first, because on first meeting their son he had remarked to a friend, "What a poetical countenance." There, too, they got to know Miss Tollemache, the "admitted Queen of Beauty" in English society at Rome, afterwards Mrs. Cowper-Temple, the Isola of the letter on page 98, and the friend to whom Ruskin dedicated *Sesame and Lilies*. With the Severns he was to be still more closely connected, for his cousin, Joan Agnew, of whom we shall hear later, married Arthur Severn, the son of Joseph Severn.

In 1842, restored to health, Ruskin was able to take his degree at Oxford, and then, like many another young man, he faced the question "What am I to do with my life?" Here we also may profitably pause and ask how far Ruskin was ready to tread the path which we now know was marked out for him. We must retrace our steps somewhat, for the story of Adèle has diverted us from other events of greater moment. On Ruskin's fourteenth birthday, his father's partner, Mr. Henry Telford, had given him a copy of Rogers's poem "Italy," with illustrations by Turner. It was an epoch-making gift, for the boy no sooner cast his eyes on the Turner vignettes than he took them for his "only masters," and set himself to imitate them as far as he could by fine pen-drawing. Turner became his idol, and it may therefore be imagined with what feelings Ruskin read in *Blackwood's Magazine* a violent and prejudiced attack on some pictures which Turner was exhibiting at the

Royal Academy Exhibition of 1836 In a towering rage he sat down to write a reply which he would have published had not the artist been too proud to allow any defence of his work to appear Nevertheless the line of thought thus started in the young writer's mind was developed later in the first volume of *Modern Painters* the book with which Ruskin began his career as an art critic

This famous work was not published till 1843 but even before this Ruskin was not unknown in print Apart from his published poems he had contributed several articles on scientific subjects to *London's Magazine of Natural History* (1834-41) a series of papers On the Poetry of Architecture to *London's Architectural Magazine* (1838-39) and he had written a fairy tale (not yet published however) for little Effie Gray the child who afterwards became his wife This story which has since delighted many other children is the well known *King of the Golden River*

It must be remembered that Ruskin was not only an exceptional person but had enjoyed exceptional advantages for at a time when most boys are busy with their grammar he had become familiar with almost all the most beautiful scenes of his own land and of France Switzerland and Italy He had from childhood studied drawing under competent teachers and was acquainted with all the most important pictures of Europe from Antwerp to Naples so that if he had lost something of the routine training of the public school and university he had also for his own particular purposes graduated in a wider university than that of Oxford and was able to write even at this early age with an adequate knowledge of his subject

The immediate occasion of *Modern Painters* was another attack on Turner even more abusive than before the *Athenæum* remarking This gentleman has on former occasions chosen to paint with cream or chocolate yolk of egg or currant jelly—here he

uses his whole array of kitchen stuff." Ruskin, who had gone abroad after completing his degree, returned from Chamounix in a state of burning indignation, and sitting down in his Herne Hill study, began to write the book which was to place him at one bound in the front rank of English writers. This was in 1842. The book was published in the next year and created a sensation. It was a defence of Turner's later style of painting, which the critics said "did not conform to existing rules and conventions"—and it rested on the argument, now familiar to modern thought, that a picture should not be judged by the rules and practices of the past, but by its fidelity to Nature, and the intention of the painter, who, if he have true imagination, as Turner had, will probably see more in Nature than has been seen before. At any rate, if he is an original genius, he will see something different from that which all men see.

But it was not merely the newness and audacity of such a doctrine that appealed to Ruskin's readers; they were captivated by the author's style, his wonderful descriptions, the poetry of his prose, and his minute observation. *Modern Painters* was clearly the work of a genius, and it effected a revolution in the world of Art. But the *Athenæum* was considerably nettled at the turn affairs were taking; Ruskin was a "whirling Dervish," and *Blackwood* suggested he was only fit for Bedlam. Ruskin himself was only excited and amused by these attacks, but his father was distressed and worried; he was afraid of his son making enemies.

The publication of this book had raised a host of new questions, each of which had an important bearing on Art. Ruskin was eager to go on with the subject, and a second volume began to take shape in his mind. He was an indefatigable worker—drawing, of course, every day; doing a "bit of close hard study from Nature"; studying botany, Turner, history,

Greek Italian and French mineralogy chemistry and anatomy Every day in which he learned nothing he regarded as a day lost In 1844 he was abroad again studying pictures architecture stained-glass windows skies stones and mountains but a more memorable tour was made in the next year when he went away for the first time without father or mother Turner, now Ruskin's intimate friend prophesied with some truth There'll be such a fidge about you when you're gone However Ruskin's always delicate health was well looked after by his body-servant George and his faithful Alpine guide Joseph Couttet described by Ruskin as one of the happiest persons and on the whole one of the best I have ever known Couttet indeed was the Mark Tapley of the little party always cheery and helpful chaffing George on his healthy British appetite and remarking philosophically when his master was depressed as people of his ardent temperament are wont to be at times

*Le pauvre enfant il ne sait pas vivre*

Usually however Ruskin was very happy for artistically and mentally he was entering into a new world At Lucca he saw for the first time the tomb of the beautiful Lady Ilaria di Caretto which became his ideal of Christian sculpture and at Pisa he was entranced by what remained of the fading frescoes of the Campo Santo but maddened by the apathy of a nation which could let such pictures go to rack and ruin for want of a little decent care Two thousand pounds he wrote to his father would put glass round the whole of the Campo Santo two thousand pounds only to save Giotto Simon Memmi Andrea Orcagna Antonio Veneziano and Benozzo Gozzoli and there will not be a fragment left in thirty years more unless it be done At Florence again he was studying what are known as the Primitives that is to say the early Italian painters who preceded Raphael—Cimabue Giotto Ghirlandajo Angelico and Fra Lippo

Lippi. A year later, in the second volume of his *Modern Painters*, Ruskin was to introduce these by no means "modern" painters to the English public. Of course these mediæval painters had been known to some extent before, but only by the few, and it was Ruskin who first showed their special qualities and taught people to admire them for putting thought and truth above execution, and even before beauty. The autumn of the year 1845 was spent at Venice, where Ruskin was "utterly crushed to the earth" by his study of a later Italian artist, Tintoretto. He wrote home to his father that he had never realized what painting meant till now, and he commented on the evidence of "quiet thought" shown in Tintoretto's "Crucifixion," where the artist has painted in his background an ass feeding on the remains of palm leaves that had been waved, so short a time before, to celebrate the Saviour's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

It was with a well-stored mind that Ruskin returned to England to write the second volume of his book, which deals mainly with two schools of Italian art—that of Angelico at Florence, and that of Tintoretto at Venice. It also explains Ruskin's theory of Beauty, which he regarded as a visible expression of the attributes of God. *Modern Painters*, vol. ii., was published in 1846, but ten years were to elapse before the third volume appeared, for in the meantime Ruskin's versatile genius was to turn to the study of Architecture, and his facile pen was to record the results in the *Seven Lamps of Architecture*—the lamps representing the qualities shown by good Architecture—and the *Stones of Venice*, a study of Venetian buildings, treated particularly as an expression of the life and character of the people who had produced them.

The story of Ruskin's relations with the English Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood may be conveniently dealt with here. The Brotherhood was founded in 1848, when three young artists—Holman Hunt, John

Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti—lighted on some engravings of those very frescoes of the Campo Santo which had attracted John Ruskin's attention three years before. Like Ruskin they too were attracted by the simplicity, sincerity and careful attention to detail shown by these early Italian artists whose qualities seemed to be so worthy of imitation that, there and then was founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood which Ruskin championed later against the attacks of the critics. Indeed to Rossetti and his beautiful fiancée Elizabeth Siddal\* Ruskin became a sort of fairy godfather buying their pictures giving them good (and much needed) advice and financing. Ida when she became ill and could not afford the holiday recommended by the doctor. Nothing could have been more generous than the way in which Ruskin disclaimed all right to any special gratitude for these kindnesses saying that he would do as much for a beautiful tree or a bit of Gothic cathedral that was in danger of falling. When she died after only two years of married life Ruskin had some idea of sharing rooms with Rossetti but the plan fell through which was fortunate for both of them since Rossetti's domestic habits would certainly have offended all Ruskin's sense of propriety. Ruskin rose betimes worked methodically and was fastidious about his food while Rossetti would rise at noon and in dressing gown and slippers would breakfast on thick slabs of bacon and fried eggs which had slowly bled to death long before his tardy arrival †

Ruskin's friendship with Millais was not so lasting though he always retained a sincere admiration for

\* Called Lizzy and sometimes Ida in Ruskin's letters. The nickname Ida was taken from Tennyson's Princess. She was Rossetti's model in many of his best known pictures notably "Dante's Dream" and "Beata Beatrix."

† Paraphrased from an amusing account by Meredith who was also a proposed partner in the scheme.



Millais's work in spite of circumstances which might have justified some prejudice. In 1848, the very year which saw the beginning of the English Pre-Raphaelite movement, Ruskin married Euphemia Chalmers Gray, the "Effie" for whom he had written his charming fairy tale, *The King of the Golden River*. He was ten years older than she and they had little in common, but the parents on both sides desired the match, and for a time all went well. The young couple were much abroad, of course, for Ruskin was now deep in the study of Gothic architecture, but they had a London house, and Effie was duly presented at Court. The lively letter describing a Society Crush was written at this time. The marriage, however, proved unfortunate in many respects, and in 1854 it was annulled. A year later Euphemia married the painter Millais, and thus Ruskin's second love affair had ended disastrously. But this time his feelings were not very deeply involved; the true love story and the greatest grief of his life were yet to come.

With the completion of *Modern Painters*, which had now run into five volumes, the last being published in 1860, Ruskin's interests turned in an apparently new direction. We have seen how his destiny as an interpreter of natural scenery began to take shape on that Sunday evening when he caught his first glimpse of the Alps. From the study of natural beauty he had inevitably been led to the study of landscape art; further research-work in Italy had drawn him on to the study of figure-drawing and painting, of sculpture, and of Gothic architecture. Now he was to appear in a new rôle—as a writer on political economy and social reform. At first sight there may seem very little connection between such subjects and Art, but to Ruskin the connection was natural and even vital. He lived at a time when the rise of modern industrialism, with its factories, its mines, its railroads, and its keen competition for

wealth was ravaging the beauty of the English countryside polluting the skies with smoke and the rivers with refuse. The old order was changing giving place to new and Ruskin's artist soul was torn by the indifference of the wealthy classes and the degradation of the toiling multitudes. He saw clearly enough that beautiful buildings, pictures and sculpture and even beautiful clothes, household utensils and furniture are neither produced nor enjoyed by a people wholly devoted to the Gospel of Getting On—a people whose minds are debased by the contemplation of sordid squalor on the one hand and tasteless luxury on the other. It seemed to him that to devote his whole time to the study of Art and Beauty while such conditions of life were allowed to exist was not only futile but almost criminal. and although he never ceased to write and lecture on art subjects his energies from this time onwards were largely directed to the working out of his social theories. To this self appointed task he brought all the force of what the great Mazzini declared to be the most analytical mind in Europe.

His first step was to attack current ideas on wealth and wages and he showed successfully that money is not wealth and that it is bad policy (even from a money making point of view) to reduce half the population of a country to a state of virtual slavery. He exposed the folly of thinking that so long as a man works it doesn't matter what he works at and he maintained that since man is not made to live by bread alone all lovely things are also necessary. The happiness of men is determined not by the amount of money they possess but by the kind of things they enjoy and their opportunities for enjoying them. No country can afford to ignore the divine command to deal justly and to love mercy since the only true wealth is life—life at its fullest and happiest for the greatest possible number of people. Like the Roman

matron, whose wealth was in her sons, the Christian nation should also be able to point to her children, saying, "These are MY jewels."

Such ideas are now so familiar to us that we can scarcely understand why their expression brought Ruskin so much abuse from his foes, and misunderstanding even among his friends; but we must remember that Ruskin did not restrict himself to lamentation over things as they were, but put forward some suggestions for their amelioration which seemed, even to his parents, little short of revolutionary. Many of these "revolutionary" ideas have since been put quite peaceably into practice; for they included free education for all, the provision of technical schools, old-age pensions, Government work for the unemployed, and a standard rate of wages in every trade.

His first book on these subjects was entitled *Unto this Last*, from the words of the Master in the Parable of the Vineyard—"I will give *unto this last* even as unto thee"—and it appeared in serial form in a new magazine, the *Cornhill*, which was edited by Thackeray. But such a storm was aroused by the publication of these essays that the series was stopped at the fourth paper, much to Ruskin's disgust, but somewhat to his father's relief, for the old man was watching his son's "*Cornhill* gambols" with a "terrified complacency" which was quite touching. Yet, as Ruskin himself believed, these essays contained "the truest, rightest-worded, and most serviceable things" he had ever written; their ultimate success was assured, though it was long in coming. Naturally, Ruskin was not silenced by opposition, and social questions were also dealt with in *Munera Pulveris*, *Time and Tide* by *Weare and Tyne*, and in *Fors Clavigera*, which was a series of letters to the public, published every month from January 1871 to Christmas 1884. *Fors* was connected, too, with some practical work Ruskin did

for the realization of his social ideals for it was the monthly journal of the Guild of St George which Ruskin had founded for the purpose of acquiring land on which he could settle the members of the Guild who were to form an agricultural community living the simple life and bound together by a common vow. All were to work but not to overwork schools and museums were to be set up the best books and the best pictures were to be found in every cottage and the Companions of the Guild were to demonstrate to an admiring world the truth of their Master's words — To watch the corn grow and the blossom set to draw hard breath over ploughshare or spade to read to think to love to hope to pray—these are the things that make man happy.

But the Utopia of Ruskin's dreams was never realized chiefly because the Founder of the Guild had neither the time nor the special qualities required for such a gigantic task. His ideals were lofty and his ideas sound in the main but he was too dogmatic in their expression too anxious to pass every one through the same mould and moreover he quite underrated the practical difficulties of agriculture as a means of livelihood in this country. But indeed Ruskin always felt and declared that his social work especially on its practical side was not his proper business in life. Nature intended him he said to watch the sun rise to draw and paint to collect mosses and minerals not to howl and bawl the right road to a generation of drunken cabmen. Why then did Ruskin allow himself to be so diverted from his proper work? Simply because he could not help it. His conscience was too active his sympathy too acute his sense of justice too easily fired for him to see the world charging along the wrong road without making an attempt to pull it up. If he did not quite succeed in doing that at least he effected some change of direction for

to-day we are all to some extent disciples of Ruskin, whether we know it or not.

It is a pity that none of St. George's schools ever materialized, for Ruskin's views on education were interesting, and in his own time even startlingly original. Borrowing a well-known phrase from Wordsworth, he declared that the purpose of education was to develop in the pupil the faculties of "admiration, hope, and love." These would be drawn out by "the study of beautiful Nature; the sight and history of noble persons; and the setting forth of noble objects of action." Believing that children are unconsciously influenced by their surroundings, he wished schools to be beautiful places, both within and without; the walls were to be covered with reproductions of the best pictures, and there was always to be a garden for what we should now call "practical work." The curriculum, which in the public elementary schools was then almost entirely confined to the three R's, was to include music, poetry, dancing, Nature study, and handcraft. So strongly did Ruskin believe in the educational value of manual labour that during his Professorship at Oxford he actually put his students to work at road-making, and himself sat down by the wayside in order to discover by actual experiment the best way of breaking stones without at the same time breaking hammers.

Other opportunities for putting some, at least, of his educational theories into practice were afforded by his connection with Winnington Hall, Whitelands College, the Working Men's College, and later on, with Coniston village school. At Winnington, a girls' boarding school in Cheshire, Ruskin spent many happy hours, and for his girl friends there he wrote a little book on crystallization, which he called *Ethics of the Dust*. Ruskin was always devoted to little girls, and this book, which is written in the form of dialogues, shows how much the "old lecturer," as he calls himself, en-

joyed chatting with the children and showing them his geological specimens. One of his innovations at Winnington was the organization of a May Day Festival and many other schools took up the idea with enthusiasm the Whitelands College annual festival becoming quite a noteworthy event. Ruskin used to present the May Queen with a gold cross designed by some famous artist and the Maids of Honour received beautifully bound copies of his books. The Rose Queen Festival was a similar institution for Irish girls because his own wild Rose—the girl he had loved and hoped to wed—had been Irish.

The story of Ruskin's love for Rose La Touche is as sad and strange as any romance to be found in literary biography. Rose was a mere child—only nine years of age—when he met her as he describes in *Præterita*, he thirty years older—a man old enough to be her father. At first Rosie was only his little pet and pupil but gradually as he watched her developing into a beautiful girl of extraordinary intelligence and great personal charm his feelings towards her underwent a subtle change. A new epoch of life had begun for him—so he wrote in his diary—in this wise—that my father and mother could travel with me no more but Rose in heart was with me always and all I did was for her sake.

When even his parents disappointed him by their lack of sympathy with his social ideals Ruskin turned more and more to the child for consolation. When he was abroad he wrote her beautiful letters (one of them is reprinted on page 96) and as she grew older he bestowed on her something very like the idealizing worship of Dante for Beatrice. Ruskin had always been strongly affected by the purity, beauty and grace of good women and in Rose—who was not only clever and beautiful but sincerely devout as well—he found all he most admired in womanhood and in 1866 he asked her to become his wife. But the difference

in their ages made the girl's parents anxious for delay, and Rose herself, though she loved and revered Ruskin more than any one else she knew, was unwilling to marry for some time. A period of three years' probation was agreed upon, by which time Rose would be twenty-one and of age to marry; but the years came and went, and still she delayed. There were religious differences between them. Rose's health was precarious, and her precocious intellect and sensitively religious temperament combined to produce a kind of morbid mania. Ruskin records that at this time her beauty took on an almost unearthly quality, so that a stranger seeing her for the first time said she looked like a young sister of Christ. Unhappily, her religious views were of the narrow and intolerant type from which Ruskin, with his greater maturity, had long since broken away; and even for Rosie, Ruskin could not pretend to be other than he was, while she was persuaded that it was her duty to refuse marriage with an unbeliever, for so Ruskin seemed to her. Periods of estrangement alternated with periods of satisfied affection, but the strain on both sides was severe. At last the differences were reconciled, and Rose returned from Ireland, only to die in the spring of the following year. "The little story of my wild Rose is ended"—so Ruskin wrote in the first bitterness of his bereavement; but it was not altogether so, for certain mystical experiences convinced Ruskin of his mistress's presence and helpful influence in all the affairs of his life, and thus a deeper reality was imparted to his belief in the "communion of saints." Like Dante, Ruskin felt that he too had a Beatrice in heaven, and from this time onwards a sort of mystical ecstasy was mingled with the memory of his lost love.

Work is the best antidote to grief. Perhaps Ruskin found it so, for the years that followed Rose's death were packed with work in great variety. In 1869 he had been elected Slade Professor of Fine Art at

Oxford this office he held until 1878 and again from 1883 to 1885. There were the affairs of St. George's Guild to attend to—educational books to be written or edited for the schools he hoped to establish on St. George's land—lectures to be given to this, that and the other society—letters to be written to the press and to private correspondents. In spite of repeated illness due to over pressure his energy was prodigious. Once he had seven books on hand at the same time. His opinion was sought on all sorts of subjects and truth to tell Ruskin was not at all unwilling to respond. One rather incautiously expressed opinion involved him in a libel action. It has to be remembered that at this time Ruskin wielded enormous power in the world of art and his opinions so often expressed to assist unrecognized merit as in the case of the early efforts of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood sometimes had a disastrous effect on the selling power of pictures he disapproved of. Hence there was really some justification for *Punch's*

POEM BY A PERFECTLY FURIOUS ACADEMICIAN

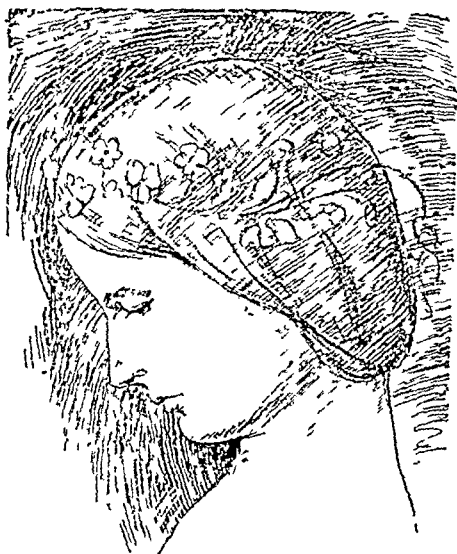
I takes and paints  
Hears no complaints  
And sells before I'm dry  
Till savage Ruskin  
He sticks his tusk in \*  
Then nobody will buy

A B—Confound Ruskin only that won't come into poetry—but it's true—*Punch*

Now several years after Mr. *Punch's* half-humorous complaint appeared Ruskin's criticism of Whistler's *Nocturne in Black and Gold*—a night piece representing the fall of a rocket. Ruskin had said that he never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred

\* Ruskin's crest was a wild boar!





ROSE LA TOUCHE

*(From a pen drawing by E. Heber Thompson,  
after Ruskin's silver point drawing)*

By permission of Messrs Allen & Unwin, Ltd

gunners for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face. Whistler retorted by bringing an action for libel against Ruskin who however was unable by reason of illness to appear in his own defence. The trial is chiefly memorable for Whistler's reply to the Attorney-General when the latter asked him whether he charged two hundred guineas for the work of a couple of days.

No, replied Whistler with great calmness. I ask it for the knowledge of a lifetime.

In the end a puzzled jury awarded Whistler one farthing damages (which it is said he wore on his watch-chain to the end of his life) and each side was left to pay its own expenses. Neither Whistler nor Ruskin could congratulate himself on such a result and Ruskin felt himself obliged to resign his Professorship at Oxford (this was in 1878) saying that he could not hold such an office if he was to be taxed by British law for saying what he thought. This however was scarcely fair either to British law or his Oxford students and in 1883 he allowed himself to be re-elected and held the post again for a couple of years when he finally resigned as a protest against the endowment of vivisection in the University.

His remaining years were spent in his beautiful home at Brantwood on the shores of Lake Coniston where his beloved cousin Joan with her husband and children surrounded him with all the care and comfort of an ideal family life. Joanna Agnew had first come to live with the Ruskins when the death of Ruskin's father made it imperatively necessary to procure some youthful companionship for his mother then in her eighty-fourth year. The old lady took a great fancy to her young and pretty niece who was never afraid of Auntie as other folks not without some reason were wont to be. So what was originally intended to be a short visit was prolonged to seven years when Joanie as they affectionately called her left to marry Mr Arthur Severn the artist. Mrs

Ruskin died at the end of the same year, and it was then that Ruskin decided to live at Brantwood, where Mr. and Mrs. Severn ultimately made their home with him. The house was a mere cottage when Ruskin bought it, but a cottage commanding a wonderful view over the lake to Coniston Old Man, at the foot of which could be seen, peeping through the trees, the quaint chimneys of Coniston Old Hall, where, it is said, Sir Philip Sidney once stayed for a time with his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. Ruskin was greatly interested in the Sidneys, and at a later date edited their metrical version of the Psalms under the title of *Rock Honeycomb*. It was one of the books he intended for use in St. George's schools, and belongs to the series he called *Bibliotheca Pastorum*—that is, the Shepherds' Library.

Brantwood was, as we have said, not much more than a cottage when Ruskin bought it, but it was one of the greatest pleasures of his life to add to and improve the house and garden, until at last it became a delightful country residence. Here he entertained his numerous friends, both old and new—among the latter, Miss Kate Greenaway, whose delightful pictures of children had aroused his interest and admiration. Many children also came to Brantwood, and Ruskin's study was often invaded by a troop from the village school, while he strewed things about until the place began to look "really comfortable," and talked on almost every conceivable subject, often above the heads of his listeners, we fear, though no one said so in view of the Professor's well-known desire that the lesson should conclude with a "good tea." Ruskin had many child-friends, some of his most delightful letters being written to one of them, little Katie Macdonald, founder of a society called the "Friends of Living Creatures." Famous man as he was, Ruskin addressed the Society with all due gravity, seriously discussing with one small member the propriety of

severely thrashing a donkey boy who would ill treat his donkey whatever might be said to him! With children Ruskin found a respite from the heavy strain of his incessant mental labour and the despairing mood which assailed him when as it seemed to him all his efforts to get people to live a simpler purer, and more beautiful life had failed. His health never robust at last broke down completely under a succession of attacks of brain fever yet to these later days of his life belong part of *Fors Clavigera* and all we have of *Præterita* two great achievements even among Ruskin's prodigious literary output.

*Fors* is an extraordinary work—more of a library than a book—and quite unique in its way. It is a series of open letters to the public ranging over the years from January 1871 to December 1884. The title (it is to be regretted that Ruskin's fondness for Latin titles prevents so many people from wanting to read any farther) means among other things Fate—the Fate which shuts and opens doors\*. In these letters Ruskin said just what Fate or Chance put into his head and the doors he opens are innumerable. Sit still for an hour and let your thoughts wander as they will from one subject to another then if you can transfer them to paper. This is what Ruskin does in *Fors* capturing with lightning like rapidity the unspoken word and chaining it for ever to the printed page. No easy task this—and its worth proportioned to the wealth of ideas and knowledge in a well stored and original mind. In *Fors* we may find what Ruskin thought about education dress pictures pantomime foreign cities wealth servants wages railways school books and children's stories all mixed up with scraps of his own life and Sir Walter Scott's life extracts from books he admired and literary criticism. *Fors* is a book in which to use Ruskin's own simile we must

\* For a fuller explanation see *Fors Clavigera* Letter 2

dig as the Australian miner digs for gold, and we need never come away unrewarded; but if we wish rather to wander in green pastures and by still waters, *Præterita* will be the book for our mood. In this placid retrospect of a stormy life, Ruskin is at his best and tenderest. "I do not mean this book," said he, "to be in any avoidable way disagreeable or querulous," and he kept his word. Moreover, except in the chapter entitled "Joanna's Care," which was written at a time when ill-health made it almost impossible for him to concentrate on his task, there is little of the rambling allusiveness which makes *Fors* such difficult reading. Unfinished as it is, *Præterita* is one of the best books in the world; it is the essential Ruskin.

Having paid his last touching tribute to his cousin's care, Ruskin laid down his pen for ever; but it was eleven long years before the end came—peaceful years for the most part, but not entirely free from recurrent attacks of the brain-fever from which he had suffered ever since the first delirium of 1878. All power and gradually all desire for work passed away from him whose lifelong motto had been "To-day." He could now serve only as one who stands and waits; yet it was during this enforced inactivity that Fate decreed a growing measure of belief in his teaching, which, had it come earlier, might have helped him to weather more philosophically many a storm of abuse and misunderstanding. His eightieth birthday brought with it such a pile of congratulatory letters and addresses from all parts of the world and all conditions of men as astonished even his most devoted disciples, and moved the old man, who could only utter a few broken words, almost to tears. "Year by year,"—so ran the principal address with which he was presented—"in ever-widening extent, there is an increasing trust in your teaching, an increasing desire to realize the noble ideals you have set before mankind in words which we feel have brought nearer to our hearts the Kingdom of

God upon earth while the University of Oxford said 'You have taught many to see the wealth of beauty in nature and art prizing the remembrance of it'

The outburst of praise was even greater in the following year when with the dawn of a new century the prophet of the nineteenth passed over into the Great Silence. On the evening of his death January 20 1900 there was a glorious sunset such as he loved so that in the word 'I an eye witness' the spectators felt as if heaven's gate itself had been flung open to receive the teacher into everlasting peace.

A general wish was expressed that Ruskin should be buried in Westminster Abbey but his cousin refused the offer knowing that he would have preferred to rest in Coniston Churchyard among the friends and neighbours he loved so well. The grave is now marked by a tall cross carved with symbolic figures representing his works. It is inscribed simply JOHN RUSKIN 1819-1900 but if any other words had been added scarcely any could have been chosen more beautiful and significant than the verse attached to a wreath sent by the local tailor. There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

## RUSKIN'S STYLE

EVEN the briefest résumé of Ruskin's work would be incomplete without some reference to the manner as well as the matter of his writings ; for Ruskin is one of the great masters of English prose, a master whose command of our language has never been surpassed, and but seldom equalled.

We have seen how he tried at first to be a poet ; and how, when at length he realized that for him the metrical form of poetry was only a hindrance to self-expression, he became a " poet in prose." When people talk of Ruskin's " style," it is, as a rule, his poetic prose of which they are thinking—the prose of those wonderful " word symphonies " which have found their way into all the anthologies, such passages as the description of the Campagna, of Giorgione's home, and of St. Mark's at Venice.

But it should be remembered that Ruskin had more than one way of writing. He himself said he had three different styles, and by finer classification we can easily arrive at more than three. I should feel inclined to say there are five main types : First, his poetic style, rhythmical, elaborate, stately, employing the subtlest devices of alliteration, assonance, parallelism, and Biblical reminiscence, and often working up through a crescendo of emotion to some great climax ; secondly, and in sharp contrast, the restrained, unadorned, and direct style in which *Unto this Last* is almost entirely written, and which Ruskin

himself valued very highly thirdly the colloquial and intimate style of some of the Letters with their very modern note of lightness and humour fourthly the involved allusive and diffuse style found often in *Iors Clavigera* where the twists and turns of Ruskin's thought are tantalizingly difficult to follow and lastly his delightful narrative style (seen at its best in *Præterita*) in which a mingled humour and irony temper with just the right degree of pungency a simplicity that might otherwise seem almost insipid.

It would of course be absurd to suggest that every one of Ruskin's books may be assigned in its entirety to one or other of these categories but it is true to say that as he grew older Ruskin tended to use a simpler more direct and conversational style than that which is commonly associated with his name by readers who know little of his work beyond *Modern Painters* *Stones of Venice* and the *Seven Lamps of Architecture*. Much of his early writing he felt was too self-conscious in its artistry too overlaid with ornament the words and the sentences were too long and the pleasant tunes made many people think only of the words and not the meaning of them. In this self-criticism and in his preference for the simpler style of *Unto this Last* and *Præterita* Ruskin probably anticipated (as in so many other ways) the verdict of posterity for modern taste is apt to be impatient of the long sentence perhaps because its carefully marshalled subordinate and parenthetical clauses demand more effort for its understanding than the average reader is willing to exert.

Although Ruskin had a natural gift for prose-writing his achievements in that kind were largely the result of personal effort and early training. Dr Johnson and the Bible supplied the main elements of a style which (to quote Ruskin's own estimate) was 'honest English of good Johnsonian lineage touched here and there with colour of a little finer or Elizabethan

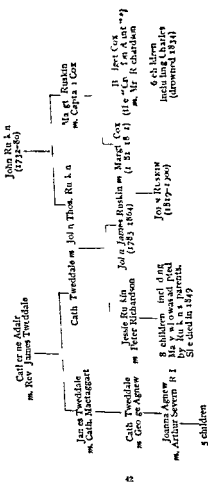


quality"; while by constant and laborious practice Ruskin learnt to find the word which exactly expressed his meaning—learnt also that "it is better to use plain short words than obscure long ones," and that all art of the obvious kind is best avoided. Ruskin's convictions, however, were not shared by that section of the public which liked "fine" writing, and he found the popular preference for his earlier books rather hard to combat.

"People used to call me a good writer then; now they say I can't write at all; because, for instance, if I think anybody's house is on fire, I only say, 'Sir, your house is on fire;' whereas formerly I used to say, 'Sir, the abode in which you probably passed the delightful days of youth is in a state of inflammation,' and everybody used to like the effect of the two p's in 'probably passed,' and of the two d's in 'delightful days.'"—*Fors Clavigera*, Letter 23.

One need hardly say that it is not alliteration in itself which is here reprehended, but only a forced and unnatural use of it.

A well-known critic has said that John Ruskin "struck the lyre of prose in every one of its infinite notes." The selections that follow are sufficiently varied to enable the reader to distinguish some at least of this infinite number of notes. The three accounts of the Ilaria Monument are included for purposes of comparison—the first being the simplest possible description from a letter to his father, the second the same description written up for publication in the second volume of *Modern Painters* (and spoilt by the last paragraph), and the third a more critical account in Ruskin's later manner.



It should be noted that both Ruskin and his Scottish aunt and his "Croydon aunt," as he calls them married a Mr Richardson but the Richards were not related.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PASSAGES

### Infancy

I LIVED until I was more than four years old in Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, the greater part of the year ; for a few weeks in summer breathing country air by taking lodgings in small cottages (real cottages, not villas, so called) either about Hampstead, or at Dulwich, at " Mrs. Ridley's," the last of a row in a lane which led out into the Dulwich fields on one side, and was itself full of buttercups in spring, and blackberries in autumn. But my chief remaining impressions of those days are attached to Hunter Street. My mother's general principles of first treatment were, to guard me with steady watchfulness from all avoidable pain and danger ; and, for the rest, to let me amuse myself as I liked, provided I was neither fretful nor troublesome. But the law was, that I should find my own amusement. No toys of any kind were at first allowed ;—and the pity of my Croydon aunt for my monastic poverty in this respect was boundless. On one of my birthdays, thinking to overcome my mother's resolution by splendour of temptation, she bought the most radiant Punch and Judy she could find in all the Soho bazaar—as big as a real Punch and Judy, all dressed in scarlet and gold, and that would dance, tied to the leg of a chair. I must have been greatly impressed, for I remember well the look of the two figures, as my aunt herself exhibited their virtues. My mother was obliged to accept them ; but afterwards quietly told me it was not right that I should have them ; and I never saw them again.

Nor did I painfully wish what I was never for an instant permitted to hope or even to imagine the possession of such things as one saw in toyshops. I had a bunch of keys to play with as long as I was capable only of pleasure in what glittered and jingled, as I grew older I had a cart and a ball and when I was five or six years old two boxes of well cut wooden bricks. With these modest but I still think entirely sufficient possessions and being always summarily whipped if I cried did not do as I was bid or tumbled on the stairs I soon attained secure and serene methods of life and motion and could pass my days contentedly in tracing the squares and comparing the colours of my carpet —examining the knots in the wood of the floor or counting the bricks in the opposite houses with rapturous intervals of excitement during the filling of the water-cart through its leathern pipe from the dripping iron post at the pavement edge or the still more admirable proceedings of the turncock when he turned and turned till a fountain sprang up in the middle of the street. But the carpet and the patterns I could find in bed covers dresses or wall papers to be examined, were my chief resources and my attention to the particulars in these was soon so accurate that when at three and a half I was taken to have my portrait painted by Mr Northcote I had not been ten minutes alone with him before I asked him why there were holes in his carpet. The portrait in question represents a very pretty child with yellow hair dressed in a white frock like a girl with a broad light blue sash and blue shoes to match the feet of the child wholesomely large in proportion to its body and the shoes still more wholesomely large in proportion to the feet.\*

These articles of my daily dress were all sent to the

\* This picture and the later one referred to now hang in the dining room at Brantwood. They are reproduced in the Library Edition Vol XXX pages 20 and 23.

old painter for perfect realization ; but they appear in the picture more remarkable than they were in my nursery, because I am represented as running in a field at the edge of a wood with the trunks of its trees striped across in the manner of Sir Joshua Reynolds ; while two rounded hills, as blue as my shoes, appear in the distance, which were put in by the painter at my own request ; for I had already been once, if not twice, taken to Scotland, and my Scottish nurse having always sung to me as we approached the Tweed or Esk,—

“ For Scotland, my darling, lies full in thy view,  
With her barefooted lassies, and mountains so blue,”

I had already generally connected the idea of distant hills with approach to the extreme felicities of life, in my Scottish aunt's garden of gooseberry bushes, sloping to the Tay. But that, when old Mr. Northcote asked me (little thinking, I fancy, to get any answer so explicit) what I would like to have in the distance of my picture, I should have said “ blue hills ” instead of “ gooseberry bushes,” appears to me—and I think without any morbid tendency to think overmuch of myself—a fact sufficiently curious, and not without promise, in a child of that age.

I think it should be related also that having, as aforesaid, been steadily whipped if I was troublesome, my formed habit of serenity was greatly pleasing to the old painter ; for I sat contentedly motionless, counting the holes in his carpet, or watching him squeeze his paint out of its bladders,—a beautiful operation, indeed, to my thinking ;—but I do not remember taking any interest in Mr. Northcote's application of the pigments to the canvas ; my ideas of delightful art, in that respect, involving indispensably the possession of a large pot, filled with paint of the brightest green, and of a brush which would come out of it soppy. But my quietude was so pleasing to the

old man that he begged my father and mother to let me sit to him for the face of a child which he was painting in a classical subject—where I was accordingly represented as reclining on a leopard skin, and having a thorn taken out of my foot by a wild man of the woods.

In all these particulars I think the treatment or accidental conditions of my childhood entirely right, for a child of my temperament—but the mode of my introduction to literature appears to me questionable.

I absolutely declined to learn to read by syllables, but would get an entire sentence by heart with great facility—and point with accuracy to every word in the page as I repeated it. As however when the words were once displaced I had no more to say, my mother gave up for the time the endeavour to teach me to read, hoping only that I might consent in process of years to adopt the popular system of syllabic study.

(*Præterita* Vol I chap 1)

## Childhood

When I was about four years old my father found himself able to buy the lease of a house on Herne Hill. It had front and back garden in sufficient proportion to its size—the front richly set with old evergreens and well grown lilac and laburnum; the back seventy yards long by twenty wide, renowned over all the hill for its pears and apples which had been chosen with extreme care by our predecessor (shame on me to forget the name of a man to whom I owe so much!)—and possessing also a strong old mulberry tree a tall white heart cherry tree a black Kentish one and an almost unbroken hedge, all round of alternate gooseberry and currant bush, decked, in due season (for the ground was wholly beneficent)

with magical splendour of abundant fruit : fresh green, soft amber, and rough-bristled crimson bending the spinous branches ; clustered pearl and pendant ruby joyfully discoverable under the large leaves that looked like vine.

The differences of primal importance which I observed between the nature of this garden, and that of Eden, as I had imagined it, were, that, in this one, *all* the fruit was forbidden ; and there were no companionable beasts : in other respects the little domain answered every purpose of Paradise to me ; and the climate, in that cycle of our years, allowed me to pass most of my life in it. My mother never gave me more to learn than she knew I could easily get learnt, if I set myself honestly to work, by twelve o'clock. She never allowed anything to disturb me when my task was set ; if it was not said rightly by twelve o'clock, I was kept in till I knew it, and in general, even when Latin Grammar came to supplement the Psalms, I was my own master for at least an hour before half-past one dinner, and for the rest of the afternoon.

My mother, herself finding her chief personal pleasure in her flowers, was often planting or pruning beside me, at least if I chose to stay beside *her*. I never thought of doing anything behind her back which I would not have done before her face ; and her presence was therefore no restraint to me ; but, also, no particular pleasure, for, from always having been left so much alone, I had generally my own little affairs to see after ; and on the whole, by the time I was seven years old, was already getting too independent, mentally, even of my father and mother ; and having no one else to be dependent upon, began to lead a very small, perky, contented, conceited, Cock-Robinson-Crusoe sort of life, in the central point which it appeared to me, (as it must naturally appear to geometrical animals,) that I occupied in the universe.

. . . . .

Under these circumstances what powers of imagination I possessed with r fastened themselves on inanimate things—the sky the leaves and pebbles observable within the walls of Eden—or caught at any opportunity of flight into the regions of romance compatible with the objective realities of existence in the nineteenth century within a mile and a quarter of Camberwell Green

In the afternoons when my father returned (always punctually) from his business he dined at half past four in the front parlour my mother sitting beside him to hear the event of the day and give counsel and encouragement with respect to the same—chiefly the last for my father was apt to be vexed if orders for sherry fell the least short of their due standard even for a day or two I was never present at this time however and only avouch what I r late by hearsay and probable conjecture for between four and six it would have been a grave misdemeanour in me if I so much as approached the parlour door After that in summer time we were all in the garden as long as the day lasted tea under the white heart cherry tree or in winter and rough weather at six o'clock in the drawing room—I having my cup of milk and slice of bread and butter in a little recess with a table in front of it wholly sacred to me and in which I remained in the evenings as an idol in a niche while my mother knitted and my father read to her—and to me so far as I chose to listen

(*Ibid* chap 2)

## Home Education

Such being the salutary pleasures of Herne Hill I have next with deeper gratitude to chronicle what I owe to my mother for the resolutely consistent lessons



which so exercised me in the Scriptures as to make every word of them familiar to my ear in habitual music,—yet in that familiarity revered, as transcending all thought, and ordaining all conduct.

This she effected, not by her own sayings or personal authority ; but simply by compelling me to read the book thoroughly, for myself. As soon as I was able to read with fluency, she began a course of Bible work with me, which never ceased till I went to Oxford. She read alternate verses with me, watching, at first, every intonation of my voice, and correcting the false ones, till she made me understand the verse, if within my reach, rightly, and energetically. It might be beyond me altogether ; that she did not care about ; but she made sure that as soon as I got hold of it at all, I should get hold of it by the right end.

In this way she began with the first verse of Genesis, and went straight through, to the last verse of the Apocalypse ; hard names, numbers, Levitical law, and all ; and began again at Genesis next day. If a name was hard, the better the exercise in pronunciation ; —if a chapter was tiresome, the better lesson in patience,—if loathsome, the better lesson in faith that there was some use in its being so outspoken. After our chapters, (from two to three a day, according to their length, the first thing after breakfast, and no interruption from servants allowed,—none from visitors, who either joined in the reading or had to stay upstairs,—and none from any visitings or excursions, except real travelling,) I had to learn a few verses by heart, or repeat, to make sure I had not lost, something of what was already known : and, with the chapters thus gradually possessed from the first word to the last, I had to learn the whole body of the fine old Scottish paraphrases, which are good, melodious, and forceful verse ; and to which, together with the Bible itself, I owe the first cultivation of my ear in sound. . . .

But it is only by deliberate effort that I recall the long morning hours of toil as regular as sunrise — toil on both sides equal — by which year after year my mother forced me to learn these paraphrases and chapters (the eighth of 1st Kings being one — try it good reader in a let ur hour!) allowing not so much as a syllable to be missed or misplaced while every sentence was required to be said over and over again till she was satisfied with the accent of it. I recollect a struggle between us of about three weeks concerning the accent of the of in the lines

Shall any following spring revive  
The ashes of the urn?

I insisting partly in childish obstinacy and partly in true instinct for rhythm (being wholly careless on the subject both of urns and their contents) on reciting it with an accented of. It was not I say till after three weeks labour that my mother got the accent lightened on the of and laid on the ashes to her mind. But had it taken three years she would have done it having once undertaken to do it. And as surely had she not done it — well there's no knowing what would have happened but I'm very thankful she did.

I have just opened my oldest (in use) Bible — a small closely and very neatly printed volume it is printed in Edinburgh by Sir D Hunter Blair and J Bruce, Printers to the King's Most Excellent Majesty in 1816. Yellow now with age and flexible but not unclean with much use except that the lower corners of the pages at 8th of 1st Kings and 32nd Deuteronomy are worn somewhat thin and dark the learning of these two chapters having cost me much pains. My mother's list of the chapters with which thus learned she established my soul in life has just fallen out of it. I will take what indulgence the incurious reader can

give me, for printing the list thus accidentally occurred :

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Exodus,        | chapters 15th and 20th.                                     |
| 2 Samuel,      | „ 1st, from 17th verse to the end.                          |
| 1 Kings,       | „ 8th.  |
| Psalms,        | „ 23rd, 32nd, 90th, 91st,<br>103rd, 112th, 119th,<br>139th. |
| Proverbs,      | „ 2nd, 31d, 8th, 12th                                       |
| Isaiah,        | „ 58th.   |
| Matthew,       | „ 5th, 6th, 7th.  |
| Acts,          | „ 26th.   |
| 1 Corinthians, | „ 13th, 15th.   |
| James,         | „ 4th.  |
| Revelation,    | „ 5th, 6th.   |

And truly, though I have picked up the elements of a little further knowledge—in mathematics, meteorology, and the like, in after life,—and owe not a little to the teaching of many people, this maternal installation of my mind in that property of chapters I count very confidently the most precious, and, on the whole, the one *essential* part of all my education.

And it is perhaps already time to mark what advantage and mischief, by the chances of life up to seven years old, had been irrevocably determined for me.

I will first count my blessings (as a not unwise friend once recommended me to do, continually ; whereas I have a bad trick of always numbering the thorns in my fingers and not the bones in them).

And for best and truest beginning of all blessings, I had been taught the perfect meaning of Peace, in thought, act, and word.

I never had heard my father's or mother's voice once raised in any question with each other ; nor seen an angry, or even slightly hurt or offended, glance in the eyes of either. I had never heard a servant

scolded—not even suddenly passionately, or in any severe manner—blamed—I had never seen a moment's trouble or disorder in any household matter, nor anything whatever either done in a hurry or undone in due time. I had no conception of such a feeling as anxiety—my father's occasional vexation in the afternoons when he had only got in order for twelve butts after expecting one for fifteen—as I have just stated—was never manifested to me—and itself related only to the question whether his name would be a step higher or lower in the year's list of cherry exporters—for he never spent more than half his income—and therefore found himself little incommoded by occasional variations in the total of it—I had never done any wrong that I knew of—beyond occasionally delaying the commitment to heart of some improving sentence—that I might watch a wasp on the window pane or a bird in the cherry tree—and I had never seen any grief.

Next to this quite priceless gift of Peace I had received the perfect understanding of the natures of Obedience and Faith—I obeyed word or lifted finger, of father or mother simply as a ship her helm—not only without idea of resistance—but receiving the direction as a part of my own life and force—and helpful law—as necessary to me in every moral action as the law of gravity in leaping. And my practice in Faith was soon complete—nothing was ever promised me that was not given—nothing ever threatened me that was not inflicted—and nothing ever told me that was not true.

Peace obedience faith—these three for chief good, next to these the habit of fixed attention with both eyes and mind—on which I will not further enlarge at this moment—this being the main practical faculty of my life—causing Mazzini\* to say of me in conversa-

\* Mazzini (1803-72) Italian patriot and political leader

tion authentically reported a year or two before his death, that I had "the most analytic mind in Europe" An opinion in which, so far as I am acquainted with Europe, I am myself entirely disposed to concur.

Lastly, an extreme perfection in palate and all other bodily senses, given by the utter prohibition of cake, wine, comfits, or, except in carefulest restriction, fruit; and by fine preparation of what food was given me. Such I esteem the main blessings of my childhood;—next, let me count the equally dominant calamities.

First, that I had nothing to love

My parents were—in a sort—visible powers of nature to me, no more loved than the sun and the moon: only I should have been annoyed and puzzled if either of them had gone out, (how much, now, when both are darkened!)—still less did I love God; not that I had any quarrel with Him, or fear of Him; but simply found what people told me was His service, disagreeable; and what people told me was His book, not entertaining.\* I had no companions to quarrel with, neither; nobody to assist, and nobody to thank. Not a servant was ever allowed to do anything for me, but what it was their duty to do; and why should I have been grateful to the cook for cooking, or the gardener for gardening,—when the one dared not give me a baked potato without asking leave, and the other would not let my ants' nests alone, because they made the walks untidy? The evil consequence of all this was not, however, what might perhaps have been expected, that I grew up selfish or unaffectionate; but that, when affection did come, it came with violence utterly rampant and unmanageable, at least by me, who never before had anything to manage

For (second of chief calamities) I had nothing to endure. Danger or pain of any kind I knew not: my

\* Rushin is, of course, referring to his feelings as a *child*

strength was never exercised my patience never tried and my courage never fortified. Not that I was ever afraid of anything—either ghosts, thunder, or beasts—and one of the nearest approaches to insubordination which I was ever tempted into as a child was in passionate effort to get leave to play with the lion's cubs in Wimbwell's menagerie.

Thirdly, I was taught no precision nor etiquette of manners—it was enough if in the little society we saw, I remained unobtrusive and replied to a question without shyness—but the shyness came later, and increased as I grew conscious of the rudeness arising from the want of social discipline and found it impossible to acquire in advanced life dexterity in any bodily exercise, skill in any pleasing accomplishment or ease and tact in ordinary behaviour.

Lastly, and chief of evils. My judgment of right and wrong and powers of independent action\* were left entirely undeveloped because the bridle and blinkers were never taken off me. Children should have their times of being off duty like soldiers—and when once the obedience is required is certain the little creature should be very early put for periods of practice in complete command of itself—set on the bare-backed horse of its own will and left to break it by its own strength. But the ceaseless authority exercised over my youth left me when cast out at last into the world, unable for some time to do more than drift with its vortices.

My present verdict therefore on the general tenor of my education at that time must be that it was at once too formal and too luxurious—leaving my character at the most important moment for its construction, cramped indeed but not disciplined, and only by protection innocent instead of by practice virtuous. My mother saw this herself and but too

\* *Ad* on observe I say here in thought I was too independent, as I above. (Note added by Ruskin.)

clearly, in later years ; and whenever I did anything wrong, stupid, or hard-hearted,—(and I have done many things that were all three,)—always said, “ It is because you were too much indulged.”

(*Ibid.*)

## Nurse Anne

Among the people whom one must miss out of one's life, dead, or worse than dead, by the time one is past fifty, I can only say for my own part, that the one I practically and truly miss most next to father and mother, (and putting losses of imaginary good out of the question,) is this Anne, my father's nurse, and mine. She was one of our “ many,” \* (our many being always but few,) and from her girlhood to her old age, the entire ability of her life was given to serving us. She had a natural gift and speciality for doing disagreeable things ; above all, the service of a sick-room ; so that she was never quite in her glory unless some of us were ill. She had also some parallel speciality for *saying* disagreeable things ; and might be relied upon to give the extremely darkest view of any subject, before proceeding to ameliorative action upon it. And she had a very creditable and republican aversion to doing immediately, or in set terms, as she was bid ; so that when my mother and she got old together, and my mother became very imperative and particular about having her teacup set on one side of her little round table, Anne would observantly and punctiliously put it always on the other ; which caused my mother to state to me, every morning after breakfast, gravely, that if ever a woman in this world was possessed by the Devil, Anne was that woman. But in spite of these momentary and petulant aspirations

\* From O.F. *meyné*, a household or company.

to liberality and independence of character poor Anne remained very servile in soul all her days, and was altogether occupied from the age of fifteen to seventy-two in doing other people's wills instead of her own and seeking other people's good instead of her own nor did I ever hear on any occasion of her doing harm to a human being except by saving two hundred and some odd pounds for her relations in consequence of which some of them after her funeral did not speak to the rest for several months

(*Praterita* Vol. I chap. 1)

## Continental Travel

The poor modern slaves and simpletons who let themselves be dragged like cattle or felled timber, through the countries they imagine themselves visiting can have no conception whatever of the complex joys and ingenious hopes connected with the choice and arrangement of the travelling carriage in old times. The mechanical questions first of strength—easy rolling—steady and safe poise of persons and luggage the general stateliness of effect to be obtained for the abashing of plebeian beholders the cunning design and distribution of store-cellars under the seats secret drawers under front windows invisible pockets under padded lining safe from dust and accessible only by insidious slits or necromantic valves like Aladdin's trap-door the fitting of cushions where they would not slip the rounding of corners for more delicate repose the prudent attachments and springs of blinds the perfect fitting of windows on which one-half the comfort of a travelling carriage really depends and the adaptation of all these concentrated luxuries to the probabilities of who would sit where in the little apartment which was to be virtu



ally one's home for five or six months ;—all this was an imaginary journey in itself, with every pleasure, and none of the discomfort, of practical travelling.

On the grand occasion of our first continental journey—which was meant to be half a year long—the carriage was chosen with, or in addition fitted with, a front seat outside for my father and Mary,\* a dickey, unusually large, for Anne and the courier, and four inside seats, though those in front very small, that papa and Mary might be received inside in stress of weather. I recollect, when we had finally settled which carriage we would have, the polite Mr. Hopkinson, advised of my dawning literary reputation, asking me (to the joy of my father) if I could translate the motto of the former possessor, under his painted arms, —“*Vix ea nostra voco*,” †—which I accomplishing successfully, farther wittily observed that however by right belonging to the former possessor, the motto was with greater propriety applicable to *us*.

For a family carriage of this solid construction, with its luggage, and load of six or more persons, four horses were of course necessary to get any sufficient way on it ; and half-a-dozen such teams were kept at every post-house. . . . If everything was right, the four horses were driven by one postilion riding the shaft horse ; but if the horses were young, or the riders unpractised, there was a postilion for the leaders also. As a rule, there were four steady horses and a good driver, rarely drunk, often very young, the men of stronger build being more useful for other work, and any clever young rider able to manage the well-trained and merry-minded beasts, besides being lighter on their backs. Half the weight of the cavalier, in such cases, was in his boots, which were often

\* One of Ruskin's cousins, who came to live with the Ruskins after the death of her mother.

† “*Vix ea nostra voco*,”—OVID. “I scarcely call these things our own.” Motto of Lord Sundridge and of the Earl of Warwick.

brought out slung from the saddle like two buckets the postilion after the horses were harnessed walking along the pole and getting into them

Scarcely less official for a travelling carriage of good class than its postillions was the courier or properly avant-courier whose primary office it was to ride in advance at a steady gallop and order the horses at each post house to be harnessed and ready waiting so that no time might be lost between the stages. His higher function was to make all bargains and pay all bills so as to save the family unbecoming cares and mean anxieties besides the trouble and disgrace of trying to speak French or any other foreign language. He farther knew the good inns in each town and all the good rooms in each inn so that he could write beforehand to secure those suited to his family. He was also if an intelligent man and high-class courier well acquainted with the proper sights to be seen in each town and with all the occult means to be used for getting sight of those that weren't to be seen by the vulgar. He invariably attended the ladies in their shopping expeditions took them to the fashionable shops and arranged as he thought proper the prices of articles. Lastly he knew of course all the other high-class couriers on the road and told you if you wished to know all the people of consideration who chanced to be with you in the inn.

My father would have considered it an insolent and revolutionary trespass on the privileges of the nobility to have mounted his courier to ride in advance of us besides that wisely liberal of his money for comfort and pleasure he never would have paid the cost of an extra horse for show. The horses were therefore ordered in advance when possible by the postillions of any preceding carriage (or otherwise we did not mind waiting till they were harnessed) and we carried our courier behind us in the dickey with Anne being in all his other functions and accom-

plishments an indispensable luxury to us. Indispensable, first, because none of us could speak anything but French, and that only enough to ask our way in ; for all specialties of bargaining, or details of information, we were helpless, even in France,—and might as well have been migratory sheep, or geese, in Switzerland or Italy. Indispensable, secondly, to my father's peace of mind, because, with perfect liberality of temper, he had a great dislike to being over-reached. He perfectly well knew that his courier would have his commission, and allowed it without question, but he knew also that his courier would not be cheated by other people, and was content in his representative. Not for ostentation, but for real enjoyment and change of sensation from his suburban life, my father liked large rooms ; and my mother, in mere continuance of her ordinary and essential habits, liked clean ones ; clean, and large, means a good inn and a first floor. Also my father liked a view from his windows, and reasonably said, " Why should we travel to see less than we may ? "—so that meant first floor *front*. Also my father liked delicate cookery, just because he was one of the smallest and rarest eaters, and my mother liked good meat. That meant dinner without limiting price, in reason. Also, though my father never went into society, he all the more enjoyed getting a glimpse, reverentially, of fashionable people—I mean, people of rank—he scorned fashion ; and it was a great thing to him to feel that Lord and Lady —— were on the opposite landing, and that, at any moment, he might conceivably meet and pass them on the stairs. Salvador, duly advised, or penetratively perceptive of these dispositions of my father, entirely pleasing and admirable to the courier mind, had carte-blanche in all administrative functions and bargains. We found our pleasant rooms always ready, our good horses always waiting, everybody took their hats off when we arrived and departed. Salvador presented his

accounts weekly, and they were settled without a word of demur.

To all these conditions of luxury and felicity can the modern steam puffed tourist conceive the added ruling and culminating one—that if we were never in a hurry?—coupled with the correlative power of always starting at the hour we choose—and that if we weren't ready the horses would wait? As a rule we breakfasted at our own home—till eight—the horses were pawing and neighing at the door (under the archway I should have said) by nine. Between nine and three—reckoning seven miles an hour including stoppages for minimum pace—we had done our forty to fifty miles of journey, sat down to dinner at four—and I had two hours of delicious exploring by myself in the evening—ordered in punctually at seven to tea and finishing my sketches till half past nine—bed time.

(*Prater* is Vol. I chap. 6.)

## First Sight of the Alps

On their first long Continental journey—which was undertaken in the year 1833—the Ruskins travelled up the Rhine valley to Strasburg and then to Schaffhausen whence they obtained their first view of the Alps described by Ruskin in these words:

We were still twenty miles from Schaffhausen at sunset—it was past midnight when we reached her closed gates. The disturbed porter had the grace to open them—not quite wide enough—we carried away one of our lamps in collision with the slanting bar as we drove through the arch. How much happier the privilege of dreamily entering a mediæval city, though with the loss of a lamp, than the free ingress of being jammed between a dray and a tramcar at a railroad station!

It is strange that I but dimly recollect the following

morning ; I fancy we must have gone to some sort of church or other ; and certainly, part of the day went in admiring the bow-windows projecting into the clean streets. None of us seem to have thought the Alps would be visible without profane exertion in climbing hills. We dined at four, as usual, and the evening being entirely fine, went out to walk, all of us,—my father and mother and Mary and I

We must have still spent some time in town-seeing, for it was drawing towards sunset, when we got up to some sort of garden promenade—west of the town, I believe ; and high above the Rhine, so as to command the open country across it to the south and west. At which open country of low undulation, far into blue,—gazing as at one of our own distances from Malvern of Worcestershire, or Dorking of Kent,—suddenly—behold—beyond !

There was no thought in any of us for a moment of their being clouds. They were clear as crystal, sharp on the pure horizon sky, and already tinged with rose by the sinking sun. Infinitely beyond all that we had ever thought or dreamed,—the seen walls of lost Eden could not have been more beautiful to us , not more awful, round heaven, the walls of sacred Death.

It is not possible to imagine, in any time of the world, a more blessed entrance into life, for a child of such a temperament as mine. . . . I went down that evening from the garden-terrace of Schaffhausen with my destiny fixed in all of it that was to be sacred and useful.

(*Præterita*, Vol. I. chap. 6.)

## First Love

As my adverse stars would have it, that year\* my father's partner, Mr. Domecq, thought it might for

\* 1836, when Ruskin was seventeen.

once be expedient that he should himself pay a complimentary round of visits to his British customers and I asked if meanwhile he might leave his daughters at Herne Hill to see the lions at the Tower and so on. How we got them all into Herne Hill corners and cupboards would be inexplicable but with a plan of the three stories! The arrangements were half Noah's Ark half doll's house but we got them all in. Clotilde a graceful oval faced blonde I first met Cecile a dark finely browed beautifully featured girl of thirteen, Elise again fur round faced like an English girl a treasure of good nature and good sense Caroline a delicately quaint little thing of eleven. They had all been born abroad Clotilde at Cadiz and of course convent bred but lately accustomed to be much in society during vacation at Paris. Deeper than any one dreamed the sight of them in the Champs Elysées\* had sealed itself in me for they were the first well bred and well-dressed girls I had ever seen—or at least spoken to. I mean of course by well dressed perfectly simply dressed with Parisian cutting and fitting. They were all bigoted—as Protestants would say quietly firm as they ought to say—Roman Catholics spoke Spanish and French with perfect grace and English with broken precision were all fairly sensible. Clotilde sternly and accurately so Elise gaily and kindly Cécile serenely Caroline keenly. A most curious galaxy or southern cross of unconcerned stars floating on a sudden into my obscure firmament of London suburb.

Clotilde (Adèle Clotilde in full but her sisters called her Clotilde after the queen saint and I Adèle because it rhymed to shell spell and knell) was only made more resplendent by the circlet of her sisters' beauty while my own shyness and unpresentableness were farther stiffened or rather sanded by a patriotic

\* The Paris home of the Domeccys. Ruskin had visited them there three years before the events here related.

and Protestant conceit, which was tempered neither by politeness nor sympathy ; so that while in company I sate jealously miserable like a stock-fish (in truth, I imagine, looking like nothing so much as a skate in an aquarium trying to get up the glass), on any blessed occasion of *tête-à-tête* I endeavoured to entertain my Spanish-born, Paris-bred, and Catholic-hearted mistress with my own views upon the subjects of the Spanish Armada, the Battle of Waterloo, and the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

To these modes of recommending myself, however, I did not fail to add what display I could make of the talents I supposed myself to possess. I wrote with great pains, and straining of my invention, a story about Naples (which I had never seen), and the "Bandit Leoni," whom I represented as typical of what my own sanguinary and adventurous disposition would have been had I been brought up a bandit ; and "the Maiden Giuletta," in whom I portrayed all the perfections of my mistress. Our connection with Messrs. Smith and Elder enabled me to get this story printed in *Friendship's Offering* ; and Adèle laughed over it in rippling ecstasies of derision, of which I bore the pain bravely, for the sake of seeing her thoroughly amused.

I dared not address any sonnets straight to herself ; but when she went back to Paris, wrote her a French letter seven quarto pages long, descriptive of the desolations and solitudes of Herne Hill since her departure. This letter, either Elise or Caroline wrote to tell me she had really read, and "laughed immensely at the French of." Both Caroline and Elise pitied me a little, and did not like to say that I also laughed at the contents.

The old people, meanwhile, saw little of this. Mr. Domecq, who was extremely kind and a good judge of character, rather than cause he saw that I was good-natured.

some seedling brains which would come up in time in the interests of the business he was perfectly ready to give me any of his daughters I liked who could also be got to like me but considered that the time was not come to talk of such things. My father was entirely of the same mind besides being pleased at my getting a story printed in *Friendship's Offering* glad that I saw something of girls with good manners and in hopes that if I wrote poetry about them it might be as good as the *Hours of Idleness*\*. My mother, who looked upon the idea of my marrying a Roman Catholic as too monstrous to be possible in the decrees of Heaven and too preposterous to be even guarded against on earth was rather annoyed at the whole business as she would have been if one of her chimney-pieces had begun smoking—but had not the slightest notion her house was on fire. She saw more however than my father into the depth of the feeling but did not in her motherly tenderness like to grieve me by any serious check to it. She hoped when the Domeccs went back to Paris we might see no more of them and that Adèle's influence and memory would pass away—with next winter's snow.

Under these indulgent circumstances—bitterly ashamed of the figure I had made but yet not a whit dashed back out of my daily swelling foam of furious concert supported as it was by real depth of feeling and (note it well good reader) by a true and glorious sense of the newly revealed miracle of human love in its exaltation of the physical beauty of the world I had till then sought by its own light alone—I set myself in that my seventeenth year in a state of majestic imbecility to write a tragedy on a Venetian subject in which the sorrows of my soul were to be enshrined in immortal verse—the fair heroine Bianca was to be endowed with the perfections of Desdemona and the

\* Byron's early poems



brightness of Juliet,—and Venice and Love were to be described, as never had been thought of before. . . .

I remember nothing more of that year, 1836, than sitting under the mulberry tree in the back garden, writing my tragedy. . . .

The entirely inscrutable thing to me, looking back on myself, is my total want of all reason, will, or design in the business: I had neither the resolution to win Adèle, the courage to do without her, the sense to consider what was at last to come of it all, or the grace to think how disagreeable I was making myself at the time to everybody about me. There was really no more capacity nor intelligence in me than in a just fledged owlet, or just open-eyed puppy, disconsolate at the existence of the moon.

Out of my feebly melodious complaints to that luminary, however, I was startled by a letter to my father from Christ Church, advising him that there was room for my residence in the January term of 1837, and that I must come up to matriculate in October of the instant year, 1836.

(*Ibid.*, chap. 10.)

## At Oxford

I count it is just a little to my credit that I was not ashamed, but pleased, that my mother came to Oxford with me to take such care of me as she could. Through all three years of residence, during term time, she had lodging in the High Street (first in Mr. Adams's pretty house of sixteenth-century woodwork), and my father lived alone all through the week at Herne Hill, parting with wife and son at once for the son's sake. On the Saturday, he came down to us, and I went with him and my mother, in the old domestic way, to St. Peter's, for the Sunday morning service; otherwise, they never appeared with me in public lest my companions should

laugh at me or any one else ask malicious questions concerning vintner papa and his old fashioned wife

None of the men through my whole college career ever said one word in depreciation of either of them or in sarcasm at my habitually spending my evenings with my mother. But once when Adele's elder sister came with her husband to see Oxford and I mentioned somewhat unnecessarily at dinner that she was the Countess Diane de Muisson they had no mercy on me for a month afterwards.

The reader will please also note that my mother did not come to Oxford because she could not part with me—still less because she distrusted me. She came simply that she might be at hand in case of accident or sudden illness. She had always been my physician as well as my nurse. On several occasions her timely watchfulness had saved me from the most serious danger. nor was her caution now as will be seen unjustified by the event. But for the first two years of my college life I caused her no anxiety and my day was always happier because I could tell her at tea whatever had pleased or profited me in it.

The routine of day is perhaps worth telling. I never missed chapel and in winter got an hour's reading before it. Breakfast at nine—half an hour allowed for it to a second for Captain Marryat with my roll and butter. College lectures till one. Lunch with a little talk to anybody who cared to come in or share their own commons with me. At two Buckland\* or other professor's lecture. Walk till five. Hall dinner—wine either given or accepted and quiet chat over it with the reading men or a frolic with those of my own table. but I always got round to the High Street to my mother's tea at seven and amused my

\* Dr Buckland, at that time Canon of Christ Church, was the subject of many amusing anecdotes (see *Præterita* &c. Vol. I chap. II—Library Edition)

self till Tom \* rang in, and I got with a run to Canterbury Gate, and settled to a steady bit of final reading till ten. I can't make out more than six hours' real work in the day, but that was constantly and unflinchingly given.

(*Præterita*, Vol. I. chap 11.)

## Christ Church Choir and Hall

On the whole, of important places and services for the Christian souls of England, the choir of Christ Church was at that epoch of English history virtually the navel and seat of life. There remained in it the traditions of Saxon, Norman, Elizabethan, religion unbroken,—the memory of loyalty, the reality of learning, and, in nominal obedience at least, and in the heart of them with true docility, stood every morning, to be animated for the highest duties owed to their country, the noblest of English youth. The greater number of the peers of England, and, as a rule, the best of her squirealty, passed necessarily through Christ Church. . . .

For all that I saw, and was made to think, in that cathedral choir, I am most thankful to this day.

The influence on me of the next goodliest part of the college buildings,—the hall,—was of a different and curiously mixed character. . . .

The change from our front parlour at Herne Hill, some fifteen feet by eighteen, and meat and pudding with my mother and Mary, to a hall about as big as the nave of Canterbury Cathedral, with its extremity lost in mist, its roof in darkness, and its company, an innumerable, immeasurable vision in vanishing perspective, was in itself more appalling to me than

\* Tom is the great bell in Christ Church tower.

appetizing but also from first to last I had the clownish feeling of having no business there

In the Cathedral however born or bred I felt myself present by as good a right as its bishop—nay that in some of its lessons and uses the building was less his than mine. But at table with this learned and lordly perspective of guests and state of worldly service I had nothing to do—my own proper style of dining was for ever I felt divided from this—impassably

I may as well here record a somewhat comic incident extremely trivial which took place a little while afterwards and which in spite of its triviality farther contributed to diminish in my own mind the charm of Christ Church hall. I had been received as a good humoured and inoffensive little cur contemptuously yet kindly among the dogs of race at the gentlemen-commoners' table\* and my tutor and the men who read in class with me were beginning to recognize that I had some little gift in reading with good accent thinking of what I read and even asking troublesome questions about it to the extent of being one day eagerly and admiringly congratulated by the whole class the moment we got out into quad on the consummate manner in which I had floored our tutor. I having had no more intention to floor or consciousness of flooring the tutor than a babe unborn! but had only happened to the exquisite joy of my companions to ask him something which he didn't happen to know. But a good while before attaining this degree of public approval I had made a direct attempt to bring myself into favourable notice which had been far less successful

It was an institution of the college that every week the undergraduates should write an essay on a philosophical subject explicatory of some brief Latin text of Horace Juvenal or other accredited and pithy

\* At that time there were two classes of undergraduates at the University—the Commoners and the Gentlemen-Commoners.

writer ; and, I suppose, as a sort of guarantee to the men that what they wrote was really looked at, the essay pronounced the best was read aloud in the hall on Saturday afternoon, with enforced attendance of the other undergraduates. Here, at least, was something in which I felt that my little faculties had some scope, and both conscientiously, and with real interest in the task, I wrote my weekly essay with all the sagacity and eloquence I possessed. And therefore, though much flattered, I was not surprised, when a few weeks after coming up, my tutor announced to me, with a look of approval, that I was to read my essay in hall next Saturday.

Serenely, and on good grounds, confident in my powers of reading rightly, and with a decent gravity which I felt to be becoming on this my first occasion of public distinction, I read my essay,—I have reason to believe, not ungracefully ; and descended from the rostrum to receive—as I doubted not—the thanks of the gentlemen-commoners for this creditable presentment of the wisdom of that body. But poor Clara, after her first ball, receiving her cousin's compliments in the cloakroom, was less surprised than I by my welcome from my cousins of the long table. Not in envy, truly, but in fiery disdain, varied in expression through every form and manner of English language, from the Olympian sarcasm of Charteris to the level-delivered volley of Grimston, they explained to me that I had committed grossest *lèse-majesté* against the order of gentlemen-commoners ; that no gentleman-commoner's essay ought ever to contain more than twelve lines, with four words in each ; and that even indulging to my folly, and conceit, and want of *savoir faire*, the impropriety of writing an essay with any meaning in it, like vulgar students,—the thoughtlessness and audacity of writing one that would take at least a quarter of an hour to read, and then reading it all, might be forgiven for this once to a greenhorn, but

that Coventry wasn't the word for the place I should be sent to if ever I did such a thing again. I am happy at least in remembering that I bore my fall from the clouds without much hurt or even too ridiculous astonishment. I at once admitted the justness of these representations, yet do not remember that I modified the style of my future essays materially in consequence. Neither do I remember what line of conduct I had proposed to myself in the event of again obtaining the privilege of edifying the Saturday's congregation. Perhaps my essays really diminished in value or perhaps even the tutors had enough of them. All I know is I was never asked to

(*Ibid* chap 11)

## Last Love

(*Ruskin's first meeting with Rose La Touche*)

Soon after I returned home in the eventful year 1858 a lady wrote to me from—somewhere near Green Street W—saying as people sometimes did in those days that she saw I was the only sound teacher in Art but this farther very seriously that she wanted her children—two girls and a boy—taught the beginnings of Art rightly especially the younger girl in whom she thought I might find some power worth developing—would I come and see her? I thought I should rather like to so I went to near Green Street and found the mother—the sort of person I expected but a good deal more than I expected and in all sorts of ways. Extremely pretty still herself nor at all too old to learn many things but mainly anxious for her children. Emily the elder daughter wasn't in but Rosie was—should she be sent for to the nursery? Yes I said if it wouldn't tease the child she might be sent for. So presently the drawing room door opened and Rosie came in quietly taking stock of me with her

blue eyes as she walked across the room ; gave me her hand, as a good dog gives its paw, and then stood a little back. Nine years old, on 3rd January, 1858, thus now rising towards ten ; neither tall nor short for her age ; a little stiff in her way of standing. The eyes rather deep blue at that time, and fuller and softer than afterwards. Lips perfectly lovely in profile ;—a little too wide, and hard in edge, seen in front ; the rest of the features what a fair, well-bred Irish girl's usually are ; the hair, perhaps, more graceful in short curl round the forehead, and softer than one sees often, in the close-bound tresses above the neck.

I thought it likely she *might* be taught to draw a little, if she would take time ; I did not expect her to take *pains*, and told her mother so, at once. Rosie says never a word, but we continue to take stock of each other. " I thought you so ugly," she told me afterwards. She didn't quite mean that ; but only, her mother having talked so much of my " greatness " to her, she had expected me to be something like Garibaldi, or the Elgin Theseus ; and was extremely disappointed.

I expressed myself as ready to try what I could make of Rosie ; only I couldn't come every other day all the way in to Green Street. Mamma asked what sort of a road there was to Denmark Hill ? I explained the simplicity and beauty of its ramifications round the Elephant and Castle, and how one was quite in the country as soon as one got past the triangular field at Champion Hill. And the wildernesses of the Obelisk having been mapped out, and determined to be passable, the day was really appointed for first lesson at Denmark Hill—and Emily came with her sister. . . .

That first day, when they came to Denmark Hill, there was much for them to see ;—my mother, to begin with, and she also had to see them ; on both sides the sight was thought good. Then there were thirty

Turners including the great Rialto, half a dozen Hunts a beautiful Tintoret my minerals in the study, the loaded apple-trees in the orchard, the glowing peaches on the old red garden wall. The lesson lost itself that day in pomiferous talk, with rustic interludes in the stable and pigsty. The pigs especially it was observed were highly educated and spoke excellent Irish.

When next they came lessons began duly with perspective and the analysis of the essential qualities of triangles! Having Turner's mountain drawings of his best times beside us and any quantity of convolvuluses hollyhocks plums peaches and apples to bring in from the garden the afternoon hours went fast but so much more in talk than work that I soon found if either triangles or bindweeds were to come to anything it must be under the governess's superintendence not mamma's and that I should have to make my way to Green Street and up to the schoolroom after all on at least two out of three of the lesson days. Both the children to my extreme satisfaction approved of this arrangement and the final order was that whenever I happened to go through Green Street I should pay them a visit in the nursery. Somehow from that time most of my London avocations led me through Green Street.

It chanced above all things well for me that their governess was a woman of great sense and power whom the children entirely loved and under whom mamma put herself in the schoolroom no less meekly than they partly in play but really also a little subdued by the clear insight of the fearlessly frank preceptress into her own faults. I cannot call them 'foibles' for her native wit and strength of character admitted none.

Rosie had shortly expressed her sense of her governess's niceness by calling her 'Bun', and I had not been long free of the schoolroom before she wanted a



name for me also, significant of like approval. After some deliberation, she christened me "Crumpet"; then, impressed by seeing my gentleness to beggars, canonized me as "Saint Crumpet," or shortly and practically "St. C.," which I remained ever afterwards; only Emily said one day to her sister that the C. did in truth stand for "Chrysostom." \*

(*Præterita*, Vol. III. chap. 3.)

### "Joanna's Care"

I have not time to tell of the pretty little ways in which it came about, but they all ended in my driving to No. 1 Cambridge Street, on the 19th April, 1864: where her uncle (my cousin, John Tweddale) brought her up to the drawing-room to me, saying, "This is Joan."

I had seen her three years before, but not long enough to remember her distinctly: only I had a notion that she would be "nice," and saw at once that she *was* entirely nice, both in my mother's way, and mine; being now seventeen years and some—well, for example of accuracy and conscience—forty-five days old. And I very thankfully took her hand out of her uncle's, and received her in trust, saying—I do not remember just what,—but certainly *feeling* much more strongly than either her uncle or she did, that the gift, both to my mother and me, was one which we should not easily bear to be again withdrawn. I put her into my father's carriage at the door, and drove her out to Denmark Hill.

Here is her own account of what followed between my mother and her:

"I was received with great kindness by the dear

\* Golden-mouthed—so named for his eloquence. The governess's name was Miss Bunnett.

old lady who did not inspire me as she did so many other people with a feeling of awe! We were the best of friends from the first. She ever most considerate of what would please me and make me happy; and I (ever a lover of old ladies!) delighted to find it so easily possible to please her.

Next morning she said: "Now tell me frankly child what you like best to eat and you shall have it. Don't hesitate—say what you'd really like—for luncheon to-day for instance." I said truthfully

"Cold mutton and custers" and thus became a sort of standing order (in months with the letter 'r')—greatly to the cook's amusement.

Of course I respectfully called the old lady 'Mrs Ruskin' but in a day or two she told me she didn't like it and would I call her 'Aunt' or 'Auntie'? I readily did so.

The days flew in that lovely garden and as I had only been invited to spend a week until Mr Ruskin should return home\* I felt miserable when he did come thinking I must go back to London streets and noise (though I was always very happy with my good uncle and aunts).

So when the last evening came of my week I said with some hesitation "Auntie I had better go back to my uncle's to-morrow!"

She flung down her netting and turned sharply round saying "Are you unhappy child?" "Oh no!" said I "only my week is up and I thought it was time——"

I was not allowed to finish my sentence. She said "Never let me hear you say anything again about going away as long as you are happy here stay and we'll send for your clothes and make arrangements about lessons and everything else here."

And thus it came about that I stayed *seven years!*

\* I must have been going away somewhere the day after I brought her to Denmark Hill. (Note added by Ruskin.)

—till I married ; going home now and then to Scotland, but always getting pathetic little letters there, telling me to ‘ come back as soon as my mother could spare me, that I was much missed, and nobody could ever fill my place.’ And Auntie was very old then (not that she could ever bear being called *old*, at ninety !), and I could not ever bear the thought of leaving her ! ”

Thus far Joanie ; nor virtually have she and I ever parted since. I do not care to count how long it is since her marriage to Arthur Severn ; only I think her a great deal prettier now than I did then : but other people thought her extremely pretty then, and I am certain that everybody *felt* the guileless and melodious sweetness of the face. Her first conquest was almost on our threshold ; for half an hour or so after we had reached Denmark Hill, Carlyle rode up the front garden, joyfully and reverently received as always ; and stayed the whole afternoon ; even (Joan says) sitting with us during our early dinner at five. Many a day after that, he used to come ; and one evening, “ in describing with some rapture how he had once as a young man had a delightful trip into Galloway, ‘ where he was most hospitably entertained in the town of Wigtown by a Mr. Tweddale,’ I (Joan) said quietly, ‘ I *am* so glad ! That was my grandfather, and Wigtown is my native place ! ’ He turned in a startled, sudden way, saying, ‘ Bless the child, is that so ? ’ adding some very pretty compliments to my place and its people, which filled my heart with great pride.”

I am so glad to be led back by Joanie to the thoughts of Carlyle, as he showed himself to her, and to me, in those spring days, when he used to take pleasure in the quiet of the Denmark Hill garden, and to use all his influence with me to make me contented in my duty to my mother ; which he, as, with even greater insistence, Turner, always told me was my first ;—

both of them seeing with equal clearness the happiness of the life that was possible to me in merely meeting my father's affection and hers with the tranquil exertion of my own natural powers in the place where God had set me

I draw back to my own home twenty years ago permitted to thank Heaven once more for the peace and hope and loveliness of it and the Flysian walks with Joanie and Paradisiacal with Rosie under the peach blossom branches by the little glittering stream which I had paved with crystal for them I had built behind the highest cluster of laurels a reservoir from which on sunny afternoons I could let a quite rippling film of water run for a couple of hours down behind the hayfield where the grass in spring still grew fresh and deep There used to be always a corncrake or two in it Twilight after twilight I have hunted that bird and never once got a glimpse of it the voice was always at the other side of the field or in the inscrutable air or earth And the little stream had its falls and pools and imaginary lakes Here and there it laid for itself lines of graceful sand there and here it lost itself under beads of chalcedony It wasn't the Liffey nor the With nor the Wandel but the two girls were surely a little cruel to call it The Gutter ! Happiest times for all of us that ever were to be not but that Joanie and her Arthur are giddy enough both of them yet with their five little ones but they have been sorely anxious about me and I have been sorrowful enough for myself since ever I lost sight of that peach blossom avenue Edenland Rosie calls it sometimes in her letters Whether its tiny river were of the waters of Abana\* or Euphrates or Thames I know not but they were sweeter to my thirst than the fountains of Trevi or Branda †

(*Præterita* Vol III chap 4)

\* 2 Kings V 12

† Trevi in Rome Branda in Sena.

## A Reply to his Detractors

It is quite possible for the simplest workman or labourer for whom I write to understand what the feelings of a gentleman are, and share them, if he will; but the crisis and horror of this present time are that its desire of money, and the fullness of luxury dishonestly attainable by common persons, are gradually making churls of all men; and the nobler passions are not merely disbelieved, but even the conception of them seems ludicrous to the impotent churlish mind; so that, to take only so poor an instance of them as my own life—because I have passed it in almsgiving, not in fortune-hunting, because I have laboured always for the honour of others, not my own, and have chosen rather to make men look to Turner and Luini than to form or exhibit the skill of my own hand; because I have lowered my rents, and secured the comfortable lives of my poor tenants, instead of taking from them all I could force for the tools they needed; because I love a wood-walk better than a London street, and would rather watch a seagull fly, than shoot it, and rather hear a thrush sing, than eat it; finally, because I never disobeyed my mother, because I have honoured all women with solemn worship, and have been kind even to the unthankful and the evil; therefore the hacks of English art and literature wag their heads at me, and the poor wretch who pawns the dirty linen of his soul daily for a bottle of sour wine and a cigar, talks of the "effeminate sentimentality of Ruskin."

(*Fors Clavigera*, Letter 41.)

## The Chief Sorrow of his Old Age

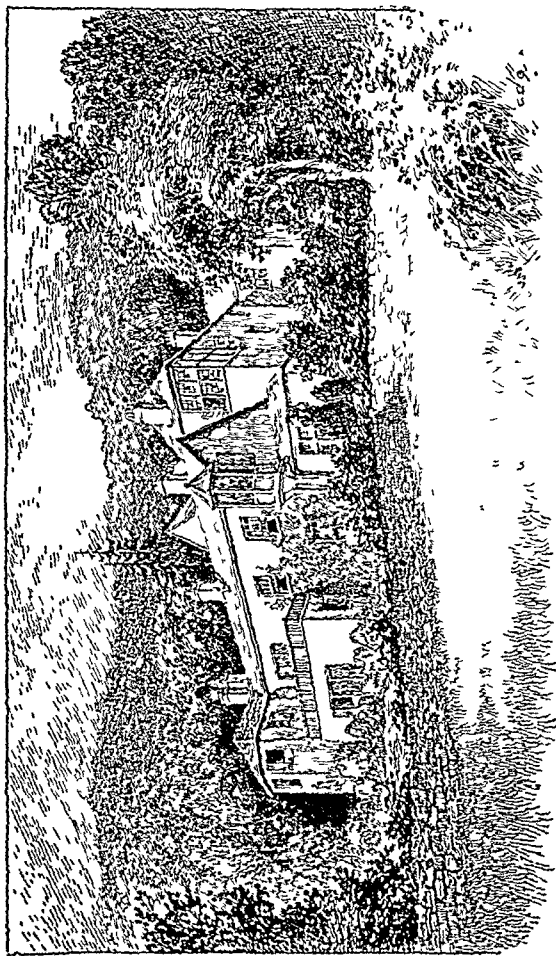
Among the many discomforts of advancing age, which no one understands till he feels them, there is

one which I seldom have heard complained of and which therefore I find unexpectedly disagreeable I knew by report that when I grew old I should most probably wish to be young again and very certainly be ashamed of much that I had done or omitted in the active years of life I was prepared for sorrow in the loss of friends by death and for pain in the loss of myself by weakness or sickness These and many other minor calamities I have been long accustomed to anticipate and therefore to read in preparation for them the confessions of the weak and the consolations of the wise

But as the time of rest or of departure approaches me not only do many of the evils I had heard of and prepared for present themselves in more grievous shapes than I had expected but one which I had scarcely ever heard of torments me increasingly every hour

I had understood it to be in the order of things that the aged should lament their vanishing life as an instrument they had never used now to be taken away from them but not as an instrument only then perfectly tempered and sharpened and snatched out of their hands at the instant they could have done some real service with it Whereas my own feeling now is that everything which has hitherto happened to me or been done by me whether well or ill has been fitting me to take greater fortune more prudently and do better work more thoroughly And just when I seem to be coming out of school—very sorry to have been such a foolish boy yet having taken a prize or two and expecting to enter now upon some more serious business than cricket—I am dismissed by the Master I hoped to serve with a— That's all I want of you  
sir

(*St Mark's Rest* chap. II)



BRANTWOOD, THE HOME OF RUSKIN'S OLD AGE

## SELECTED LETTERS

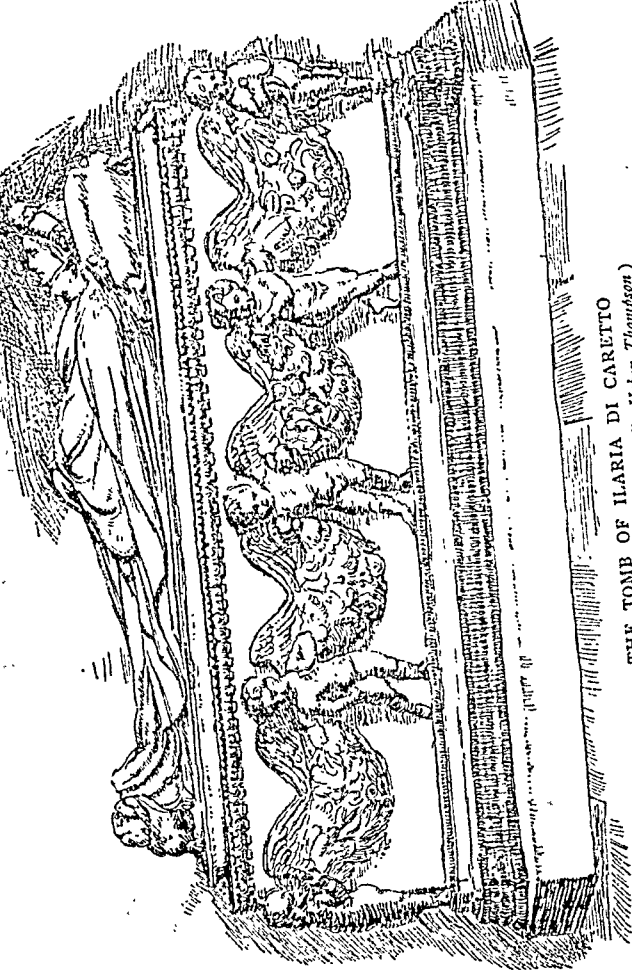
### The Tomb of Ilaria di Caretto

IN a letter to his father written from Lucca on May 6 1845 Ruskin describes a typical day—concluding thus

Finally when the rose tints leave the clouds I go and spend a quarter of an hour beside the tomb of Ilaria di Caretto It is in the Cathedral She was the second wife of Paolo Guinigi Signore of Lucca in 1430 He left the Lucchese several good laws which they have still but in a war with the Florentines he was betrayed by his allies and died in a prison at Pavia The tower of his palace fortress is overgrown with copse-wood but the iron rings to which his horses used to be fastened still are seen along the length of the street before it and the hooks by which the silken draperies were suspended on festa days

Thus his second wife died young and her monument is by Jacopo della Quercia erected soon after her death She is lying on a simple pillow with a hound at her feet Her dress is of the simplest Middle Age character folding closely over the bosom and tight to the arms clasped about the neck Round her head is a circular fillet with three star shaped flowers From under this the hair falls like that of the Magdalene its undulation just felt as it touches the cheek and no more The arms are not folded nor the hands clasped nor raised. Her arms are laid softly at length





THE TOMB OF ILARIA DI CARETTO  
(From a pen-and-ink sketch by E. Heber Thompson)

upon her body, and her hands cross as they fall. The drapery flows over the feet and half hides the hound. It is impossible to tell you the perfect sweetness of the lips and closed eyes, nor the solemnity of the seal of death which is set upon the whole figure. The sculpture—as art—is in every way perfect, truth itself, but truth selected with inconceivable refinement of feeling. The cast of the drapery for severe natural simplicity and perfect grace I never saw equalled, nor the fall of the hands. You expect every instant nay rather you seem to see every instant the last sinking into death. There is no decoration nor work about it, not even enough for protection. You may stand beside it leaning on the pillow and watching the twilight fade off the sweet dead lips and arched eyes in their sealed close.

With this I end my day, and return home as the lamps begin to burn in the Madonna shrines, to read Dante and to write to you.

## A Society Crush

1850

MY DEAREST MOTHER

Horrible party last night—stiff—large—dull—fidgety—strange—run against everybody—know nobody sort of party. Naval people. Young lady claims acquaintance with me. I know as much of her as Queen Pomare\*. Talk. Get away as soon as I can—ask who she is—Lady Charlotte Elliott—as wise as I was before. Introduced to a black man with chin in collar. Black man condescending. I abuse several things to black man, chiefly the House of Lords. Black man says he lives in it—asks where I live—I don't want to tell him—obliged. Go away and ask who black man is. Mr Shaw Lefevre—as wise as I

\* Queen of Otaheite (Society Islands)

was before. Introduced to a young lady—young lady asks if I like drawing—go away and ask who she is—Lady Something Conyngham. Keep away with back to the wall and look at watch. Get away at last—very sulky this morning—Hope my father's better—dearest love to you both.

Ever, my dearest mother,

Your most affectionate son.

### An Answer to Prayer

*(From a letter to his father, written from Venice on Good Friday, 1852.)*

One day last week I was getting very nervous about the *continued* feeling of relaxation in the throat, though in itself such a trifle. . . . I began thinking over my past life, and what fruit I had had of the joy of it, which had passed away, and of the hard work of it ; and I felt nothing but discomfort in looking back ; for I saw that I had always been working for *myself* in one way or another. Either for myself in doing things that I enjoyed, *i.e.* climbing mountains, looking at pictures, etc. ; or for my own aggrandizement and satisfaction of ambition, or else to gratify my affections in pleasing you and my mother, but that I had never really done anything for God's service. Then I thought of my investigations of the Bible and found no comfort in that either, for there seemed to me nothing but darkness and doubt in it ; and as I was thinking of these things the illness increased upon me, and my chest got sore, and I began coughing just as I did at Salisbury, and I thought I was going to have another violent attack at once, and that all my work at Venice must be given up. This was about two in the morning. So I considered that I had now neither pleasure in looking to my past life, nor any hope, such as would

be any comfort to me on a sick bed of a future one  
 And I made up my mind that this would never do  
 So after thinking a little more about it I resolved that  
 at any rate I would act as if the Bible *were* true that  
 if it were not at all events I should be no worse off  
 than I was before that I would believe in Christ and  
 take Him for my Master in whatever I did that  
 assuredly to disbelieve the Bible was quite as difficult  
 as to believe it that there were mysteries either way  
 and that the best mystery was that which gave me  
 Christ for a Master And when I had done this I fell  
 asleep directly When I rose in the morning the cold  
 and cough were gone and though I was still unwell  
 I felt a peace and spirit in me I had never known  
 before at least to the same extent and the next day  
 I was quite well and everything has seemed to go  
 right with me ever since all discouragement and  
 difficulties vanishing even in the smallest things

## On His Education

*To the Rev. W. L. Brown*

EDINBURGH 8th November 1853

The system of our universities is not so bad it  
 seems to me in itself as in being considered the end of  
 a youth's efforts for many previous years It is vain  
 to say that University distinction ought not to be  
 made an end It is so—by *all* weak young men in-  
 cluding all men up to my calibre and perhaps some  
 considerably above it and therefore many who have  
 power enough to make them of considerable impor-  
 tance The very few who have *perfectly* rational  
 parents and perfectly well-educated minds may turn  
 our university system to a good advantage but *they*  
 would do the same with anything

I will tell you frankly what I feel respecting myself. I was as fond of nature at five years old as I am now, and had as good an ear for the harmony of words : only I was ready to take more licences than I should allow myself now—that is to say, that the eye for colour and form, the affection for the mysterious, and the ear for sound, God gave me when I was born, as He does, it is my entire conviction, whatever is to constitute the man's real *power*, to every man. My mother early made me familiar with the Bible, and thereby rather aided than checked my feeling for what was beautiful in language. I owe much to having early learnt the 32nd of Deuteronomy and the 15th of Exodus *thoroughly* by heart. My mother had excellent taste in reading, besides being an unwearied reader. She could not have given me the *ear*, but the ear being there, she educated the taste in emphasis and never allowed a theatrical or false one. Here is one of the beginnings of wholesome education. There was no teaching of elocution, but merely of common sense, and plainness. . . .

I went on till I was to go to College, *educating myself* in mineralogy, drawing, and the power of stringing words together, which I called poetry. . . . On the whole, I am conscious of no result from the University in this respect, except the dead waste of three or four months in writing poems for the Newdigate, a prize which I would unhesitatingly do away with. No man who could write poetry ever wanted a prize to make him do it, and the present of a small book to a child at five years old will do more than three years' labour with him at fifteen.

Touching mineralogy and drawing, my whole heart went to these ; and if education had been understood at the time, and the university system other than it was, I should have had the best masters in both, and obtained complete knowledge of the one, and power in the other, by the time I was twenty. . . .

*P S* I should have been first asked what I liked and had been in the habit of studying I should have answered—Mineralogy natural history drawing poetry and mathematics that I *rather* liked Greek

Good you should have answered Show me your poetry write me a prose essay on any subject that at present interests you Go to Dr Buckland and ascertain how much time he can spare you and to Dr Daubeny and Mr Hill Let them examine you first closely and ascertain where you ought to begin

When I gave you my poetry and essay you would have seen in a moment that the poetry was uninventive and valueless but that the prose writing had some thought in it and that the talent of putting words together was worth cultivating You should then have consulted with Buckland Daubeny and Hill and on their report have addressed me next day as follows

Sir you will not of course expect that our estimate of your powers and of what is best to be done for you should *altogether* agree with yours—but if we are wrong you will have plenty of time to show us that we are so in your after life meantime we hope for your diligence in following out the plan of study we shall adopt for you We think that your prose writing is good You will furnish us with a short essay every week on which we will make such remarks as we think proper *We do not expect you to follow our advice unless you see the justice of it Every writer however young must form his own style by his own judgment*

We do not think it advisable at present to cultivate your taste for poetry and we beg of you to give us your word of honour that you will not occupy your time in writing so much as a single verse while you are at the University This is the only thing in which we wish to put constraint upon you

## A Defence of the Idealists

*(This is a second postscript to the preceding letter.)*

There is really nothing funnier among the various odd, wild ways of the world, than the way the "practical" people turn round upon Carlyle and Tennyson and Kingsley, and all Thinkers whatsoever who find fault with said "practical" persons, saying, "You find fault with what is going on—why don't you tell us what would be right?"

Ay, just as if "what is Right" in the sway of a mighty nation, were to be picked up from the ground, handy, and shown to all comers at once in a neat box, like a diamond ring in a shop window. You go up to a fellow in the street who is beating his child to death, and you tell him, "Come, my fine fellow, this won't do; that's not the way to bring up your child."

"D—n you," says the practical parent, or "D—n the little wretch, what is the way to bring him up?"

Yes, that is a question, not to be settled on the pavement in the sunshine, only assuredly not to give him black eyes every morning.

So what is Right in the administration of a nation is not to be said, nor seen, in a breath or a glimpse. You may have to see your way to it through glasses stained red with blood, or fight your way to it through the valley of the Shadow of Death. If you ask what it is, sincerely, you will soon see where this first blow is to be struck or *not* struck; strike *that*—or *don't* strike it—and you will see where to lay another—no other-wise.

Yes, and another of the funny things—in which, by the way, you took your share when we had a chat last,—is the practical people's way of saying, "That has been tried, and failed." Why, of course it failed. Do you suppose everybody ever played off a piece of

Right on the Eternal Piano without striking false notes at first? Failed!—yes—and it will fail fifty times over depend upon it as long as your fingers are baby's fingers your business is not to mind your fingers but to look at the written notes.

When people first try to walk with an Alpine pole they always use it the wrong way. You show them the right way which upon proceeding to practise they as a matter of course immediately get a very awkward fall and get up rubbing their shins. If they were practical people they would immediately say in a grave manner 'That has been tried and failed.' But most Alpine prospective walkers having some poetry in them they say in an unpractical manner 'Well we'll try again' and thus walking by faith after a few more tumbles come to be able to cross a glacier.

## On his Apparent Borrowings from Carlyle

TO THOMAS CARLYLE

DENMARK HILL Jan 73 1855

People are continually accusing me of borrowing other men's thoughts and not confessing the obligation. I don't think there is anything of which I am more utterly incapable than of this meanness, but it is very difficult always to know how much one is indebted to other people and it is always most difficult to explain to others the degree in which a stronger mind may guide you without your having at least intentionally borrowed this or the other definite thought. The fact is it is very possible for two people to hit *sometimes* on the same thought and I have over and over again been somewhat vexed as well as surprised at finding that what I really *had* and *here* I had worked out for myself corresponded very closely



to things that you had said much better. I entreat you not to think when (if you have ever patience to do so) you glance at anything I write—and when you come, as you must sometimes, on bits that look like bits of yourself spoiled—to think that I have been mean enough to borrow from you knowingly, and without acknowledgment. How much your general influence has told upon me, I know not, but I always confess it, or rather boast of it, in conversation about you.

### “The True Task of the Modern Poet”

TO ALFRED TENNYSON.

STRASBURG, *September, 1859.*

DEAR MR. TENNYSON,

I have had the *Idylls* in my travelling desk ever since I could get them across the water, and have only not written about them because I could not quite make up my mind about that increased quietness of style. . . .

As a description of various nobleness and tenderness the book is without price; but I shall always wish it had been nobleness independent of a romantic condition of externals in general. . . . Treasures of wisdom there are in it, and word-painting such as never was yet for concentration; nevertheless it seems to me that so great power ought not to be spent on visions of things past, but on the living present. For one hearer capable of feeling the depth of this poem I believe ten would feel a depth quite as great if the stream flowed through things nearer the hearer. And merely in the facts of modern life—not drawing-room, formal life, but the far-away and quite unknown growth of souls in and through any form of misery or servitude—there is an infinity of what men should be

told and what none but a poet can tell I cannot but think that the intense masterful and unerring transcript of an actuality and the relation of a story of any real human life as a poet would watch and analyse it would make all men feel more or less what poetry was as they felt what Life and Fate were in their instant workings

This seems to me the true task of the modern poet. And I think I have seen faces and heard voices, by road and street side which claimed or conferred as much as ever the loveliest or saddest of Camelot As I watch them the feeling continually weighs upon me, day by day more and more that not the grief of the world but the loss of it is the wonder of it I see creatures so full of all power and beauty with none to understand or teach or save them The making in them of miracles and all cast away for ever lost as far as we can trace And no in memoriam

## A Strawberry Feast

TO MISS ROSE LA TOLCHE

BOULOGNE June 21 1861

MY DEAREST POSIE

I'm going to have my letter ready in case I want to write in a hurry that it may not disappoint you by blank paper again I used to write long pieces of diary when I was abroad now I am too lazy, but I will do a little bit sometimes for Wisie and you—if you care to read it sometimes I might like to be put in mind of a thing which I had forgotten myself (You see I've fixed on "Wisie",\* I think it's very funny and nice)

\* i.e. as a pet name for Rose's sister Emily after Ruskin's little dog Wisie, for an account of which see *Præterita* Vol III chap. 2 St Crumpet, or St Chrysostom, was Rose's nickname for Ruskin

Well, to-day, by the way of beginning well, I overslept myself. Then breakfast in a penitent manner. Then wrote a business letter—to make amends. Then took my umbrella in one hand, and stick in the other, and went out to market.

The market was all white and red, with clean caps and strawberries. Choosing a nice-looking head and cap, I request her to choose me a basket. She produces one which looks unexceptionable.

*St. C.* "Mais—toutes les plus belles sont en haut, n'est-ce pas, et toutes les mauvaises en bas?"

*White Cap.* "Monsieur, je viderai le panier devant vous!"

*St. C.* "C'est pas la peine. Je me fie à vous."

*White Cap.* "Je vous assure, Monsieur, elles sont toutes bonnes. Est-ce que la petite n'ira pas avec vous pour les porter?"

*St. C.* "Ça serait trop loin. Je m'en vais jusqu'à Portel" (three miles).

*White Cap.* "Ah, bien, oui—c'est trop loin."

*La Petite.* "J'y serais allée, Monsieur, tout de même."

*St. C.* "Nous verrons, peut-être, quand j'aurai deux paniers à porter. Mais, Madame — vous allez me faire cadeau d'une feuille de choux, pour que ça se tienne fraîche."

*White Cap.* "Mais bien volontiers, Monsieur."

This being thus satisfactorily arranged, I shoulder my umbrella, put my stick through handle of basket (weighing about three pounds), and march off for Portel.

Portel is the first fishing village south of Boulogne. My immediate object there is a little cabaret close to the village school and church, inhabited by a triple-traded aubergiste (who makes hooks for mackerel and catches crabs), his wife, and their three children.

The youngest boy (to whom I had yesterday made the present of a plate of cherries, for family distribu-

tion which he immediately took possession of by thrusting his whole hand down through the middle) announces my approach. The wife receives me graciously and shows me into sanded parlour. I beg her to provide me with some milk, sugar, *pain de ménage* and four plates, the whole to be ready in an hour. Which being faithfully promised, I proceed to descend the hill which leads to a large farm on the other side of the village and meet coming up to it my hostess's little daughter (9) with a sad blue mark on her forehead, continuous down the middle of the pretty little French nose and terminating in a red scar on the upper lip. On my inquiring the reason of these unaccustomed appearances, Clotilde explains to me how coming out of church on a poussée how being poussée I fell with my face on the corner of a step and how ça m'a fait bien mal.

St C. Va seulement chez toi petite nous allons manger des fraises et nous nous guérirons bientôt.

Clotilde disappears with a slightly incredulous, but nevertheless illumined countenance and I following the cart road a few steps further turn aside into a narrow footpath with a steep bank of grass on one side crowned by a cornfield on the other a hedge of wild roses with gaps here and there into a sloping field at the bottom of which lies the great old French farm with grey stone gates and rusticated columns of the time of Louis XV. Far beyond on a sweep of open hillside and crowning it rise the thatched roofs of another domaine ended by a huge old round tower which looks like a donjon but is only a pigeonier. Looking back I see between the grass bank and the wild roses a little blue half-moon-shaped piece of calm sea. I walk slowly and more slowly and at last take to examining the newly eared wheat.

Rose dearie did you ever notice the way the ears come out of the thin grassy envelope of the stalk? You know that verse First the blade, then the

ear ; after that, the full corn *in* the ear." \* You know it is usually read as if it meant three stages of growth only, as if the blade *became* the ear ; and the ear *became* the corn. But I believe St. Paul means deeper things. If you look at the young plant you will see that it has *one* broad leaf or "blade" at the *top* as the most conspicuous part of it : the ear at this time being entirely wrapped up and hidden, deep down in the seeming stalk. Gradually the stalk gives way ; the ear bursts *through* it ; and rises, rises till it *passes* the blade, which, once uppermost, remains now an appendage to the risen ear. But there is yet no *corn* in the ear. It must blossom first ; and little by little the white, precious farina forms in its alternate buds.

Now whether you suppose the "kingdom of God" to be spoken of the world, or of change in a single human heart, does it not seem that each condition is, as it were, the defence of, and preparation for another ? —the Last only being the precious or perfect one. The Jewish dispensation enclosed the Christian as the blade does the ear : the Christian itself, blossoming partly, partly blighted, has yet to undergo the winnowing by Him whose Fan is in His hand ; who will gather the grain into His garner and burn the chaff with fire.† Or if you take it of a single soul, does it not seem as if each successive condition of mind, though for a time good and necessary, were only the covering and guiding preparation for better things ; better, that is to say, more useful and fruitful. First the leaf, like fresh religious feeling which may pass away—(whereof he that binds the sheaves fills not his bosom)—but if it hold, beneath it springs the ear, which we may take for well-formed purpose—that also may be blasted before it be grown up ;—lastly the good fruit forms, some sixty, some an hundred-fold,

\* Mark iv. 28.

† Matt. iii. 12.

which is like charity that doth not fail—the blade and the chaff suling and ceasing like prophecies and like knowledge \* We thought the green was good—but it passes we thought the gold was good—but the winds carry it away as if it is gone we thought at least the grain was good—but even that must be crushed under the millstone—and only at last the white is good.

I did not of course quite think out this by the side of the wheat field—but partly felt it. For I was disturbed by a feeling of remorse at spoiling some of the most beautiful ears by pulling them open—and besides disturbed a little by the rose hedge on the other side which led me into some reflections upon the symbolism and destinies of Roses—but as there could not be of the slightest interest to you Pet I shall not set them down.

I was also interrupted by some Poppies in which the grey gold in green or whatever you can call the indescribable colour of the stamens was of peculiar refinement and the leaves of quite blinding scarlet. I could not moralize on the poppies partly because I was bent on discovering the cause of the bronze colour with my magnifying glass and partly because a sentence of Edmond About's about *ma raide honte* came into my head. *Les coquelicots sont bien rouges — mais je le fus davantage en entendant* etc.

Having got past the poppies I found myself in a narrow lane leading down to the gate of the old farm. Approaching which—and standing to observe the interior I surprised and shocked two of the farm dogs who immediately trotted to the gate and remonstrated with me upon my conduct. I pretended not to understand French which made them very angry and as all angry people do they barked louder in order to make themselves understood. For peace's sake I stepped out of their sight behind the gate pillars and after

addressing some general remarks upon the English, of a deprecatory character, to the pigeons, they returned to their kennels. Whereupon I set myself to sketch the gate in profile, delighting myself with imagining what the state of their minds would have been, if they could have known I was still there, making sketches of their master's gate.

The gate pillars were all overgrown with moss, and large white daisies, in fringed rows, white on the blue sky. Before I had drawn half of these it was time to think of Clotilde's strawberries, so I put up my book and walked briskly back to Portel.

A white cloth on the table, the basket with undisturbed cabbage leaf, a jug of milk, and four plates were "duly set." The children had been withdrawn from temptation into the inner room.

I chose and carefully drew from the stalks thirty-six model strawberries, and put twelve on each of the three plates. I then looked for the largest in the basket and put that in the middle of Clotilde's plate. Then I filled with milk; and touched the crests with sugar after the manner of Alps, and then summoned the children. Nervous excitement preventing the two youngest from carrying their plates even, I had to carry them myself into the inner room, where we found Mamma laying cloth for dinner. "Ah, Monsieur, vous les gâtez," said she, — "ça sera pour le dessert."

I returned into my salle and ate my own twelve strawberries—(the *pain de ménage* is exquisite).

Then I returned to the inner room, to see how dinner is going on.

Clotilde has arranged her own strawberries and her sister's in a perfect circle round the plates. But the little boy has apparently refused absolutely to eat his strawberries on decorative principles; and has got his plate close to him in its original Alpine chaos.

In the centre of the table is a magnificent dish of fried skate, with (as Madame explains to me) "Sauce

*à la matelote* (which is brown and has more vinegar in it than I like) and surrounded by delicatest new potatoes. The head of the family (for more dignity and ease eats out of the dish) Mamma and the children have plates and little black eyes resolute in all things has possessed himself of the largest knife on the table with which he is vainly but perseveringly endeavouring to cut segments out of a new potato naturally polished—slippery moreover with *sauce à la matelote* and so large that he cannot hold it though he applies to it the whole acquisitive power of his left hand. The arrangements are further enlivened by a brown jug of brown liquid about which I am unfortunately curious for it turns out to be flat and sour cider and a discussion arising on the relative merits of our English bottled it seems probable that I shall be obliged to finish my glass in order to convince me of the futility of my English prejudice. To avoid which penalty I rise somewhat hastily pay for my bread and milk present the strawberry basket with remaining contents to the children (thereby dispersing a slight cloud which had arisen on the face of the *ménagère* because her mother would not eat the large thirteenth which she had set aside for her) and walked down to the beach. Low tide and black rocks, as far as the eye can reach.

## A Test for Poetry

(From a letter to his father)

LUCERNE November 2 1861

You may nearly always know in a moment whether poetry is good and true by writing it in prose form. If it then reads like strong and sensible or tender and finished prose and is perfectly simple it is good.

You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet where is the



Pyrrhic phalanx gone? Of two such lessons, why forget the nobler and the manlier one?

But when the dawn came, dim and sad, and chill with early showers, her quiet eyelids closed. She had another morn than ours.

Mais elle était du monde, où les plus belles choses Ont le pire; et, rose, elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses, L'espace d'un matin.\*

In some cases reversion is admissible—or even desirable—but it is always a fault if it will not read as a vigorous prose form also. Intense simplicity is the first characteristic of the greatest poetry. I wish I could let you hear the melodious simplicity of the Greek epitaph on the Slave, Zosima:

“Zosima, while she lived, was a slave in her body only, Now, she has gained freedom for that also.”

Or this, on Epictetus:

“I was Epictetus, a slave, and a cripple,  
Penniless, and Beloved of the Gods.”

## Counting his Blessings

TO MISS JOAN AGNEW.

DENMARK HILL, *Saturday* (Jan. 22, '70).

. . . Perhaps, on the whole, it would be well to stop grumbling and mewing all day long. It may be that, a little, that makes the Gods so angry. Let me see what I can say that's nice.

\* These extracts are from Byron's *Don Juan*, Hood's *Death Bed*, and *Consolation à Monsieur du Périer, Gentilhomme d'Aix en Provence, sur la mort de sa fille*, in the *Poésies de Malherbe*.  
(2,847)

First Auntie s \* behaving beautifully and let me run ever so often up and down stairs without calling out

I ve written some nice bits of lecture and the worst work s over now

I can do no end of good—nearly every day—if I like

I m 51 not 61 You know I might have been 61 mightn t I ? Some people *are* 61 Poor people To think of that !

I m hump-backed † All hump-backed people are remarkable people—intellectually

Though I m hump-backed I m not Richard III

I ve got such a lovely piece of green flint on the table Bloodstone

I ve got two hundred pounds odd—at the bank

I ve got some Turner drawings—about eighty or ninety I suppose

I ve got a fusée

I ve got an Isola ‡

Now I think a good many people would like to be me

## A Biting Retort

A somewhat impertinent critic once wrote to Ruskin

Since you disparage so much iron and its manufacture may it be asked how your books are printed and how is their paper made ? Probably you are aware that both printing and paper making machines are made with that material

To this Ruskin replied as follows

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\* Joan s auntie—Ruskin s mother

† A playful allusion to the stoop induced by much writing.

‡ Mrs Cowper Temple

CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD,  
*February 10, 1872.*

SIR,

I am indeed aware that printing and paper-making machines are made of iron. I am aware also, which you perhaps are not, that ploughshares and knives and forks are. And I am aware, which you certainly are not, that I am writing with an iron pen. And you will find in *Fors Clavigera*, and in all my other writings which you may have done me the honour to read, that my statement is that things which have to do the work of iron should be made of iron, and things which have to do the work of wood should be made of wood; but that (for instance) hearts should not be made of iron, nor heads of wood—and this last statement you may wisely consider when next it enters into yours to ask questions.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. RUSKIN.

## Bad Colds

To Miss SUSAN BEEVER.

BRANTWOOD, *December 16, 1884.*

Here, not I, but a thing with a dozen of colds in its head, am!

I caught one cold on Wednesday last, another on Thursday, two on Friday, four on Saturday, and one at every station between this and Ingleborough on Monday. I never was in such ignoble misery of cold. I've no cough to speak of, nor anything worse than usual in the way of sneezing, but my hands are cold, my pulse nowhere, my nose tickles and wrings me, my ears sing like kettles, my mouth has no taste, my heart no hope of ever being good for anything, any more. I never passed such a wretched morning by my

own fire-side in all my days and I've quite a fiendish pleasure in telling you all this and thinking how miserable you'll be too! Oh me if I ever get to feel like myself again won't I take care of myself!

*Undated*

Seven of the eleven colds are better but the other four are worse and they were the worst before and I'm such a wrick and rag and lump of dust being made mud of that I'm ashamed to let the maids bring me my dinner Your contemptible miserable beyond pitiable past deplorable

J R.

## A Birthday Wish

TO MISS KATE GREENAWAY

BRANTWOOD March 17 1885

And it is your birthday! I don't know how to give you any wish that you would care to come true—but I will wish you—every birthday—some new love of lovely things and some new forgetfulness of the teasing things and some higher pride in the praising things and some sweeter peace from the hurrying things and some closer fence from the worrying things And longer stay of time when you are happy and lighter flight of days that are unkind

## Animal Friends

TO MISS KATE MACDONALD *the little girl who founded a children's society called The Friends of Living Creatures*

February 16 1888

Jim' put me to great shame the other day Usually he comes at the fish course and has the tail of

a whiting, or the head of a sole—and then doesn't ask for anything else—but sits on my knee, or in the arm-chair beside me, all the rest of dinner time.

. . . We had got to the game course, and Jim was sitting on my knee, and I was explaining how good he was to be content with sitting there, and not asking for anything, when, just as I had got the words out of my mouth, Jim put his paw on the table-cloth—looked to see what was on the table—then quietly helped himself to the breast of ptarmigan that was on my plate, and jumped down to make himself comfortable with it on the rug.

And the same evening Betsy got into my room and made *herself* comfortable just in the very middle of my bed. It's all very well being a friend to Living Creatures, but I think the Living Creatures might find better ways of being friendly to me.

TO MISS KATE GREENAWAY.

*February 17, 1888.*

. . . I am puzzled by Jim's inattention to drops left on the table-cloth: he cleans his saucer scrupulously, but I've never seen him lap up, or touch up, a spilt drop. He is an extremely graceful grey-striped, fat cushion of a cat, with extremely winning ways of lying on his back on my knee, with his head anywhere and his paws everywhere. But he hasn't much conversation, and our best times are, I believe, when we both fall asleep.

## NARRATIVE AND BIOGRAPHICAL PASSAGES

### The Story of Arachne

(An old Mother told)

You have all heard of Arachne and how she was changed into a spider — but perhaps you have never heard her story quite through — and it is worth hearing and thinking of

Arachne was a Lydian girl of a poor family — and as all girls should do she had learned to spin and to weave — and not merely to weave or knit good stout clothes — but to make pictures upon or in them — such as you know Ienelope is said to have woven — and such as the queen of our own William the Conqueror embroidered — which are still preserved at Bayeux in Normandy — and known all over the world as the Bayeux tapestry

Well Arachne could make the most beautiful pictures with her needle or shuttle that ever were seen in those days — I don't know if young girls still sew sampler — I wish they *did* — and will tell you why presently — But to finish with Arachne

She was so proud of her beautiful sewing — that she wished the goddess Minerva herself — whom if you will not think it affected I would rather call by her own name of Athena — would come and try her skill against her — Now the goddess Athena always wove and embroidered her own dresses — and she was not going to let a poor little Lydian girl challenge her at

her own special work. So she came first to Arachne under the likeness of an old woman, prudent and gentle ; and spoke kindly to Arachne, and told her a little Lydian girl ought not to be proud, and ought not to challenge goddesses. But Arachne, on that, only got more insolent ; told the old woman to hold her tongue, and that she only wished Athena would come herself that instant. So Athena changed from the old woman into herself, and accepted the challenge ; and they sat down beside each other, the goddess and the girl, and began to weave.

Now the story, as it is carelessly read, ends, as it seems, quite disgracefully for the goddess. Arachne's work is as quickly done as hers ; and as well. It is surrounded and finished with an exquisite border of ivy leaves. Athena looks close, and cannot find the least fault with it. Whereupon she loses her temper ; tears her rival's tapestry to pieces ; and strikes her four times across the forehead with her box-wood shuttle. Arachne, mad with anger, hangs herself ; and Athena changes her into a venomous spider.

At first sight, like many other stories of the kind, this seems not only degrading, but meaningless. The old mythologists, however, always made their best fables rough on the outside. If you chose to throw them away for that, so much the worse for you. You did not deserve, they thought, to understand them.

Let us look into the story a little closer.

First, you may be surprised at the Goddess of Wisdom losing her temper. But, of all the goddesses, she always is the angriest, when she is angry ; and if ever you yourselves go on doing a great many foolish things, one after another, and obstinately don't attend to anything she says quietly, you will find she bursts out upon you all at once ; and when she does, I can tell you, you won't forget it in a hurry.

But next, why are you told that Arachne's work was bordered with ivy leaves ?

Because ivy leaves in their wanton running about everywhere were the emblem of the wild god Bacchus and were put there in express impertinence to Athena and wilful insult to her trim leaved olive of peace. But more than that Arachne had made all the pictures in her tapestry of base and abominable things while Athena had woven in hers the council of the gods about Athens how the city should be named.

Nor were the things which Arachne had pictured abominable merely but they were all insulting to the gods and dwelt on every legend which could make sacred and solemn things despised by men. That was why Athena tore the tapestry to pieces not because she was jealous of it.

Then thirdly we are told she could find no fault with it.

Now one of the things I have always tried most to impress on the British workman is that his work must not be too precise—that he must not think of avoiding faults but of gaining virtues. To young students in deed I have always said and shall always say the exact reverse of that. See that every step you take is right it does not matter in the beginning how small your merits so only that you commit wilfully no errors. But to the finished workman or artist though it will be wise for him also often to hold to his student's rule still when he is to do his best he need never think to do it without manifold failure. If he has not failed somewhere he has only tried to do as Arachne did—ignoble things. Phidias had faults. Raphael had faults. Reynolds had faults and many and bad ones. Arachne in the outer aspect of her work had none but in the inner power of it it was fault altogether.

Fault also—remember—of a poisonous and degrading kind sensual insolent and foul so that she is changed by Athena into the meanest of animals and the most loathsomely venomous whose work instead



of being an honour to the palaces of kings, is to be a disgrace to the room of the simplest cottager.

*(From an Address delivered at Woolwich, 1870.)*

## An Allegory of War and Peace

Though I am no poet, I have dreams sometimes :— I dreamed I was at a child's May-day party, in which every means of entertainment had been provided for them, by a wise and kind host. It was in a stately house, with beautiful gardens attached to it ; and the children had been set free in the rooms and gardens, with no care whatever but how to pass their afternoon rejoicingly. They did not, indeed, know much about what was to happen next day ; and some of them, I thought, were a little frightened because there was a chance of their being sent to a new school where there were examinations ; but they kept the thoughts of that out of their heads as well as they could, and resolved to enjoy themselves. The house, I said, was in a beautiful garden, and in the garden were all kinds of flowers ; sweet, grassy banks for rest ; and smooth lawns for play ; and pleasant streams and woods ; and rocky places for climbing. And the children were happy for a little while, but presently they separated themselves into parties ; and then each party declared it would have a piece of the garden for its own, and that none of the others should have anything to do with that piece. Next, they quarrelled violently which pieces they would have ; and at last the boys took up the thing, as boys should do, "practically," and fought in the flower-beds till there was hardly a flower left standing ; then they trampled down each other's bits of the garden out of spite ; and the girls cried till they could cry no more ; and so they all lay down at last breathless in the ruin, and waited for

the time when they were to be taken home in the evening \*

Meanwhile the children in the house had been making themselves happy also in their manner. For them there had been provided every kind of indoor pleasure: there was music for them to dance to, and the library was open with all manner of amusing books, and there was a museum full of the most curious shells and animals and birds, and there was a workshop with lathes and carpenter's tools for the ingenious boys, and there were pretty fantastic dresses for the girls to dress in, and there were microscopes and kaleidoscopes, and whatever toys a child could fancy, and a table in the dining room loaded with everything nice to eat.

But in the midst of all this it struck two or three of the more practical children that they would like some of the brass-headed nails that studded the chairs, and so they set to work to pull them out. Presently the others who were reading or looking at shells took a fancy to do the like, and in a little while all the children nearly were spraining their fingers in pulling out brass-headed nails. With all that they could pull out they were not satisfied, and then everybody wanted some of somebody else's. And at last the really practical and sensible ones declared that nothing was of any consequence that afternoon except to get plenty of brass-headed nails, and that the books and the cakes and the microscopes were of no use at all in themselves, but only if they could be exchanged for nail heads. And at last they began to fight for nail heads as the others fought for the bits of garden. Only here and there a despised one shrank away into a corner and tried to get a little

\* I have sometimes been asked what this means. I intended it to set forth the wisdom of men in war contending for kingdoms and what follows to set forth their wisdom in peace contending for wealth. (Note added by Ruskin.)

quiet with a book, in the midst of the noise ; but all the practical ones thought of nothing else but counting nail-heads all the afternoon—even though they knew they would not be allowed to carry so much as one brass knob away with them. But no—it was—"Who has most nails? I have a hundred, and you have fifty;" or, "I have a thousand, and you have two. I must have as many as you before I leave the house or I cannot possibly go home in peace." At last, they made so much noise that I awoke, and thought to myself, "What a false dream that is, of *children*! The child is the father of the man; and wiser. Children never do such foolish things. Only men do."

(From "*The Mystery of Life and its Arts*," a Lecture delivered at Dublin, 1868.)

## The Story of Cousin Charles

My Croydon aunt left four sons—John, William, George, and Charles; and two daughters—Margaret and Bridget. . . . The four boys were all of them good, and steadily active. The eldest, John, with wider business habits than the rest, went soon to push his fortune in Australia, and did so; the second, William, prospered also in London.

The third brother, George, was the best of boys and men, but of small wit. . . . He went into the business in Market Street, with his father, and both were a great joy to all of us in their affectionateness and truth: neither of them in all their lives ever did a dishonest, unkind, or otherwise faulty thing—but still less a clever one! For the present, I leave them happily filling and drawing their cart of quartern loaves in morning round from Market Street.

The fourth and youngest, Charles, was like the last-born in a fairy tale, ruddy as the boy David, bright of

heart not wanting in common sense or even in good sense and affectionate like all the rest. He took to his schooling kindly and became grammatical polite and presentable in our high Herne Hill circle. His elder brother John had taken care of his education in more important matters. very early in the child's life he had put him on a bare-backed pony with the simple elementary instruction that he should be thrashed if he came off. And he staid on. Similarly for first lesson in swimming he pitched the boy like a pebble into the middle of the Croydon Canal jumping in of course after him but I believe the lad squatted to the brink without help and became when he was only that high a fearless master of horse and wave.

When at last it was thought that Charles with all his good natured gifts and graces should be brought from Croydon town to London city and initiated into the lofty life and work of its burgess orders and when accordingly he was after various taking of counsel and making of inquiry apprenticed to Messrs. Smith Elder and Co. of 63 Cornhill with the high privilege of coming out to dine at Herne Hill every Sunday the new and beaming presence of cousin Charles became a vivid excitement and admirable revelation of the activities of youth to me and I began to get really attached to him.

Every day at Cornhill Charles became more delightful and satisfactory to everybody who knew him. How a boy living all day in London could keep so bright a complexion and so crisply Achillean curls of hair—and all the gay spirit of his Croydon mother—was not easily conceivable but he became a perfect combination of the sparkle of Jin Vin with the steadiness of Tunstall \* and was untroubled by the charms of any unattainable Margaret for his master

\* Apprentices in *The Fortunes of Nigel* by Sir Walter Scott

had no daughter ; but, as worse chance would have it, a son ; so that looking forward to possibilities as a rising apprentice ought, Charles saw that there were none in the house for him beyond the place of cashier, or perhaps only head-clerk. His elder brother, who had taught him to swim by throwing him into Croydon Canal, was getting on fast as a general trader in Australia, and naturally longed to have his best-loved brother there for a partner. Bref, it was resolved that Charles should go to Australia. The Christmas time of 1833 passed heavily, for I was very sorry ; Mary, a good deal more so ; and my father and mother, though in their hearts caring for nobody in the world but me, were grave at the thought of Charles's going so far away ; but, honestly and justifiably, thought it was for the lad's good. I think the whole affair was decided, and Charles's outfit furnished, and ship's berth settled, and ship's captain interested in his favour, in something less than a fortnight, and down he went to Portsmouth to join his ship joyfully, with the world to win. By due post came the news that the ship could not sail because of the west wind. And post succeeded post, and still the west wind blew. We liked the west wind for its own sake, but it was a prolonging of farewell which teased us, though Charles wrote that he was enjoying himself immensely, and the captain, that he had made friends with every sailor on board, besides the passengers.

And still the west wind blew. I do not remember how long—some ten days or fortnight, I believe. At last, one day my mother and Mary went with my father into town on some shopping or sight-seeing business of a cheerful character ; and I was left at home, busy also about something that cheered me greatly, I know not what ; but when I heard the others come in, and upstairs into the drawing-room, I ran eagerly down and into the room, beginning to tell them about this felicity that had befallen me,

whatever it was. They all stood like statues, my father and mother very grave. Mary was looking out of the window—the farthest of the front three from the door. As I went on boasting of myself she turned round suddenly, her face all streaming with tears and caught hold of me and put her face close to mine that I might hear the sobbing whisper, Charles is gone.

The west wind had still blown clearly and strong and the day before there had been a fresh breeze of it round the side at Spithead exactly the kind of breeze that drifts the clouds and ridges the waves in Turner's Gosport.

The ship was sending her boat on shore for some water or the like—her little cutter or somehow sailing boat. There was a heavy sea running and the sailors and I believe also a passenger or two had some difficulty in getting on board. 'Will I go too?' said Charles to the captain. 'No, he stood seeing them down the side. 'Are you not afraid?' said the captain. 'I never was afraid of anything in my life,' said Charles, and went down the side and leaped in.

The boat had not got fifty yards from the ship before she went over, but there were other boats sailing all about them like gnats in midsummer. Two or three scudded to the spot in a minute and every soul was saved except Charles who went down like a stone.

All this we knew by little and little. For the first day or two we would not believe it but thought he must have been taken up by some other boat and carried to sea. At last came word that his body had been thrown ashore at Cowes and his father went down to see him buried. That done and all the story heard for still the ship stayed he came to Herne Hill to tell Charles's auntie all about it. (The old man never called my mother anything else than auntie.) It

was in the morning, in the front parlour—my mother knitting in her usual place at the fireside, I at my drawing, or the like, in my own place also. My uncle told all the story, in the quiet, steady sort of way that the common English do, till just at the end he broke down into sobbing, saying (I can hear the words now), “They caught the cap off of his head, and yet they couldn’t save him.”

(*Præterita*, Vol. I. chap 7)

## The Boyhood of Turner

Born half-way between the mountains and the sea—that young George of Castelfranco—of the Brave Castle:—Stout George they called him, George of Georges, so goodly a boy he was—Giorgione.

Have you ever thought what a world his eyes opened on—fair, searching eyes of youth? What a world of mighty life, from those mountain roots to the shore;—of loveliest life, when he went down, yet so young, to the marble city—and became himself as a fiery heart to it?

A city of marble, did I say? nay, rather a golden city, paved with emerald. For truly, every pinnacle and turret glanced or glowed, overlaid with gold, or bossed with jasper. Beneath, the unsullied sea drew in deep breathing, to and fro, its eddies of green wave. Deep-hearted, majestic, terrible as the sea,—the men of Venice moved in sway of power and war; pure as her pillars of alabaster, stood her mothers and maidens; from foot to brow, all noble, walked her knights; the low bronzed gleaming of sea-rusted armour shot angrily under their blood-red mantle-folds. Fearless, faithful, patient, impenetrable, implacable,—every word a fate—sate her senate. In hope and honour, lulled by flowing of wave around

their isles of sacred sand each with his name written and the cross graved at his side lay her dead A wonderful piece of world Rather itself a world It lay along the face of the waters no larger as its captains saw it from their masts at evening than a bar of sunset that could not pass away but for its power it must have seemed to them as if they were sailing in the expanse of heaven and this a great planet whose orient edge widened through ether A world from which all ignoble care and petty thoughts were banished with all the common and poor elements of life No foulness nor tumult in those tremulous streets that filled or fell beneath the moon but rippled music of majestic change or thrilling silence No weak walls could rise above them no low roofed cottage nor straw built shed Only the strength as of rock and the finished setting of stones most precious And around them far as the eye could reach still the soft moving of stainless waters proudly pure, as not the flower so neither the thorn nor the thistle could grow in the glancing fields Ethereal strength of Alps dreamlike vanishing in high procession beyond the Torcellan shore blue islands of Paduan hills poised in the golden west Above free winds and fiery clouds ranging at their will —brightness out of the north and bloom from the south and the stars of the evening and morning clear in the limitless light of arched heaven and circling sea

Such was Giorgione's school—such Titian's home

Near the south west corner of Covent Garden a square brick pit or well is formed by a close set block of houses to the back windows of which it admits a few rays of light Access to the bottom of it is obtained out of Maiden Lane through a low archway and an iron gate and if you stand long enough under the archway to accustom your eyes to the darkness you may see on the left hand a narrow door which formerly gave quiet access to a respectable barber's



shop, of which the front window, looking into Maiden Lane, is still extant, filled, in this year (1860), with a row of bottles, connected, in some defunct manner, with a brewer's business. A more fashionable neighbourhood, it is said, eighty years ago than now—never certainly a cheerful one—wherein a boy being born on St. George's day, 1775, began soon after to take interest in the world of Covent Garden, and put to service such spectacles of life as it afforded.

No knights to be seen there, nor, I imagine, many beautiful ladies; their costume at least disadvantageous, depending much on incumbency of hat and feather, and short waists; the majesty of men founded similarly on shoebuckles and wigs,—impressive enough when Reynolds will do his best for it, but not suggestive of much ideal delight to a boy.

"Bello ovile dov' io dormu agnello;" \* of things beautiful, besides men and women, dusty sunbeams up or down the street on summer mornings; deep furrowed cabbage-leaves at the greengrocer's; magnificence of oranges in wheelbarrows round the corner; and Thames' shore within three minutes' race.

None of these things very glorious; the best, however, that England, it seems, was then able to provide for a boy of gift: who, such as they are, loves them—never, indeed, forgets them. The short waists modify to the last his visions of Greek ideal. His foregrounds had always a succulent cluster or two of greengrocery at the corners. Enchanted oranges gleam in Covent Gardens of the Hesperides; and great ships go to pieces in order to scatter chests of them on the waves.† That mist of early sunbeams in the London dawn

\* Dante's allusion to Florence as a fair sheep-fold, *Paradiso*, xxv. 5.

† Ruskin here refers to two of Turner's pictures—"The Garden of the Hesperides" and "The Meuse Orange Merchantmen going to pieces on the Bar."

crosses many and many a time the clearness of Italian air and by Thames shore with its stranded barges and ghidings of red sail dearer to us than Iucerne lake or Venetian lagoon—by Thames shore we will die

With such circumstances round him in youth let us note what necessary effects followed upon the boy. I assume him to have had Giorgione's sensibility (and more than Giorgione's if that be possible) to colour and form. I tell you further and this fact you may receive trustfully that his sensibility to human affection and distress was no less keen than even his sense for natural beauty—heart-sight deep as eyesight.

Consequently he attaches himself with the faith fullest child love to everything that bears an image of the place he was born in. No matter how ugly it is—has it anything about it like Maiden Lane or like Thames shore? If so it shall be painted for their sake. Hence to the very close of life Turner could endure ugliness which no one else of the same sensibility would have borne with for an instant. Dead brick walls blank square windows old clothes market womanly types of humanity—anything fishy and muddy like Billingsgate or Hungerford Market had great attraction for him. black barges patched sails and every possible condition of fog.

You will find these tolerations and affections guiding or sustaining him to the last hour of his life. the notablist of all such endurances being that of dirt. No Venetian ever draws anything foul but Turner devoted picture after picture to the illustration of effects of dinginess smoke soot dust and dusty texture old sides of boats weedy roadside vegetation dung hills straw yards and all the soilings and stains of every common labour.

And more than this he not only could endure but enjoyed and looked for *litter* like Covent Garden

wreck after the market. His pictures are often full of it, from side to side ; their foregrounds differ from all others in the natural way that things have of lying about in them. Even his richest vegetation, in ideal work, is confused ; and he delights in shingle, débris, and heaps of fallen stones. The last words he ever spoke to me about a picture were in gentle exultation about his St. Gothard : " that *litter* of stones which I endeavoured to represent."

The second great result of this Covent Garden training was, understanding of and regard for the poor, whom the Venetians, we saw, despised ; whom, contrarily, Turner loved, and more than loved—understood. He got no romantic sight of them, but an infallible one, as he prowled about the end of his lane, watching night effects in the wintry streets ; not sight of the poor alone, but of the poor in direct relations with the rich. He knew, in good and evil, what both classes thought of, and how they dealt with, each other.

Reynolds and Gainsborough, bred in country villages, learned there the country boy's reverential theory of " the squire " and kept it. They painted the squire and the squire's lady as centres of the movements of the universe, to the end of their lives. But Turner perceived the younger squire in other aspects about his lane, occurring prominently in its night scenery, as a dark figure, or one of two, against the moonlight. He saw also the working of city commerce, from endless warehouse, towering over Thames, to the back shop in the lane, with its stale herrings—highly interesting these last ; one of his father's best friends, whom he often afterwards visited affectionately at Bristol, being a fishmonger and a glue-boiler ; which gives us a friendly turn of mind towards herring-fishing, whaling, Calais poissardes, and many other of our choicest subjects in after-life ; all this being connected with that mysterious forest below London

sorrow and passing away of men this was the great human truth visible to him

(*Modern Painters* Vol V chap 9)

## The Character of Turner

And now let me tell you something of his personal character. You have heard him spoken of as ill-natured and jealous of his brother artists. I will tell you how jealous he was. I knew him for ten years and during that time had much familiar intercourse with him. I *never once* heard him say an unkind thing of a brother artist and I *never once heard him find a fault* with another man's work. I could say this of *no other* artist whom I have ever known.

But I will add a piece of evidence on this matter of peculiar force. Probably many here have read a book which has been lately published to my mind one of extreme interest and value the life of the unhappy artist Benjamin Haydon. Whatever may have been his faults I believe no person can read his journal without coming to the conclusion that his heart was honest and that he does not *willfully* misrepresent any fact or any person. Even supposing otherwise the expression I am going to quote to you would have all the more force because as you know Haydon passed his *whole life* in war with the Royal Academy of which Turner was one of the most influential members. Yet in the midst of one of his most violent expressions of exultation at one of his victories over the Academy he draws back suddenly with these words — But Turner behaved well and did me justice.

I will give you however besides two plain facts illustrative of Turner's jealousy.

You have perhaps not many of you heard of a

painter of the name of Bird : I do not myself know his works, but Turner saw some merit in them : and when Bird first sent a picture to the Academy, for exhibition, Turner was on the hanging committee. Bird's picture had great merit ; but no place for it could be found. Turner pleaded hard for it. No, the thing was impossible. Turner sat down and looked at Bird's picture a long time ; then insisted that a place must be found for it. He was still met by the assertion of impracticability. He said no more, but took down one of his own pictures, sent it out of the Academy, and hung Bird's in its place.

Match that, if you can, among the annals of hanging committees. But he could do nobler things than this.

When Turner's picture of Cologne was exhibited in the year 1826, it was hung between two portraits, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, of Lady Wallscourt and Lady Robert Manners.

The sky of Turner's picture was exceedingly bright, and it had a most injurious effect on the colour of the two portraits. Lawrence naturally felt mortified, and complained openly of the position of his pictures. You are aware that artists were at that time permitted to retouch their pictures on the walls of the Academy. On the morning of the opening of the exhibition, at the private view, a friend of Turner's who had seen the Cologne in all its splendour, led a group of expectant critics up to the picture. He started back from it in consternation. The golden sky had changed to a dun colour. He ran up to Turner, who was in another part of the room. "Turner, *what* have you been doing to your picture?" "Oh," muttered Turner in a low voice, "poor Lawrence was so unhappy. It's only lamp-black. It'll all wash off after the exhibition!" He had actually passed a wash of lamp-black in water-colour over the sky, and utterly spoiled his picture for the time, and

heard Turner all our lives stigmatized as brutal, and uncharitable, and selfish, and miserly. How are we to understand these opposing statements ? ”

Easily. I have told you truly what Turner was. You have often heard what to most people he appeared to be. Imagine what it was for a man to live seventy years in this hard world, with the kindest heart, and the noblest intellect of his time, and never to meet with a single word or ray of sympathy, until he felt himself sinking into the grave. From the time he knew his true greatness all the world was turned against him : he held his own ; but it could not be without roughness of bearing, and hardening of the temper, if not of the heart. No one understood him, no one trusted him, and every one cried out against him. Imagine, any of you, the effect upon your own minds, if every voice that you heard from the human beings around you were raised, year after year, through all your lives, only in condemnation of your efforts, and denial of your success. This may be borne, and borne easily, by men who have fixed religious principles, or supporting domestic ties. But Turner had no one to teach him in his youth, and no one to love him in his old age. Respect and affection, if they came at all, came unbelieving, or came too late. Naturally irritable, though kind—naturally suspicious, though generous—the gold gradually became dim, and the most fine gold changed, or, if not changed, overcast and clouded. The deep heart was still beating, but it was beneath a dark and melancholy mail, between whose joints, however, sometimes the slightest arrows found entrance, and power of giving pain. He received no consolation in his last years, nor in his death. Cut off in great part from all society—first, by labour, and at last by sickness—hunted to his grave by the malignities of small critics, and the jealousies of hopeless rivalry, he died in the house of a stranger—one companion of his life, and one only,

staying with him to the last. The window of his death-chamber was turned towards the west, and the sun shone upon his face in its setting and rested there, as he expired.

(*Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, III.)

## DESCRIPTIVE PASSAGES

### The Tomb of Ilaria di Caretto

IN the Cathedral of Lucca, near the entrance door of the north transept, there is a monument by Jacopo della Quercia to Ilaria di Caretto, the wife of Paolo Guinigi. . . . She is lying on a simple couch with a hound \* at her feet; not on the side, but with the head laid straight and simply on the hard pillow, in which, let it be observed, there is no effort at deceptive imitation of pressure. It is understood as a pillow, but not mistaken for one. The hair is bound in a flat braid over the fair brow, † the sweet and arched eyes are closed, the tenderness of the loving lips is set and quiet; there is that about them which forbids breath; something which is not death nor sleep, but the pure image of both. The hands are not lifted in prayer, neither folded, but the arms are laid at length upon the body, and the hands cross as they fall. The feet are hidden by the drapery, and the forms of the limbs concealed, but not their tenderness.

If any of us, after staying for a time beside this tomb, could see, through his tears, one of the vain and unkind encumbrances of the grave, which, in these

\* In 1878 Ruskin wrote: "I foolishly, in *Modern Painters*, used the generic word 'hound' to make my sentence prettier. He is a flat-nosed bull-dog."

† In 1883 Ruskin added this note: "The braiding is not flat, but in tresses, of which the lightest escape, and fall free."



hollow and heartless days feigned sorrow builds to foolish pride he would I believe receive such a lesson of love as no coldness could refuse no fatuity forget and no insolence disobey

(*Modern Painters* Vol II Pt 11 Sec 1 chap 7)

## St Mark's, Venice

(*Contrasted with an English Cathedral*)

And now I wish that the reader before I bring him into St Mark's Place would imagine himself for a little time in a quiet English cathedral town \* and walk with me to the west front of its cathedral. Let us go together up the more retired street at the end of which we can see the pinnacles of one of the towers and then through the low grey gateway with its battlemented top and small latticed window in the centre into the inner private-looking road or close where nothing goes in but the carts of the tradesmen who supply the bishop and the chapter and where there are little shaven grass plots fenced in by neat rails before old fashioned groups of somewhat diminutive and excessively trim houses with little oriel and bay windows jutting out here and there and deep wooden cornices and eaves painted cream colour and white and small porches to their doors in the shape of cockle-shells or little crooked thick indescribable wooden gables warped a little on one side and so forward till we come to larger houses also old fashioned but of red brick and with gardens behind them and fruit walls which show here and there among the nectarines the vestiges of an old cloister arch or shaft and looking in front on the cathedral square itself laid out in rigid divisions of smooth

\* Either Canterbury or Salisbury

grass and gravel walk, yet not uncheerful, especially on the sunny side, where the canon's children are walking with their nurserymaids. And so, taking care not to tread on the grass, we will go along the straight walk to the west front, and there stand for some time, looking up at its deep-pointed porches and the dark places between their pillars where there were statues once, and where the fragments, here and there, of a stately figure are still left, which has in it the likeness of a king, perhaps indeed a king on earth, perhaps a saintly king long ago in heaven; and so higher and higher up to the great mouldering wall \* of rugged sculpture and confused arcades, shattered, and grey, and grisly with heads of dragons and mocking friends, worn by the rain and swirling winds into yet unseemlier shape, and coloured on their stony scales by the deep russet-orange lichen, melancholy gold; and so, higher still, to the bleak towers, so far above that the eye loses itself among the bosses of their traceries, though they are rude and strong, and only sees like a drift of eddying black points, now closing, now scattering, and now settling suddenly into invisible places among the bosses and flowers, the crowd of restless birds that fill the whole square with that strange clangour of theirs, so harsh and yet so soothing, like the cries of birds on a solitary coast between the cliffs and sea.

Think for a little while of that scene, and the meaning of all its small formalisms, mixed with its serene sublimity. Estimate its secluded, continuous, drowsy felicities, and its evidences of the sense and steady performance of such kind of duties as can be regulated by the cathedral clock; and weigh the influence of

\* Alas! all this was described from things now never to be seen more. Read, for "the great mouldering wall," and the context of four lines, "the beautiful new parapet by Mr. Scott, with a gross of kings sent down from Kensington." (Note added by Ruskin in 1879.)

those dark towers on all who have passed through the lonely square at their feet for centuries and on all who have seen them rising far away over the wooded plain or catching on their square masses the last rays of sunset when the city at their feet was indicated only by the mist at the bend of the river. And then let us quickly recollect that we are in Venice and land at the extremity of the *Calla Lunga San Moisè* which may be considered as there answering to the secluded street that led us to our English cathedral gateway.

We find ourselves in a paved alley some seven feet wide where it is widest full of people and resonant with cries of itinerant salesmen—a shriek in their beginning and dying away into a kind of brazen ringing all the worse for its confinement between the high houses of the passage along which we have to make our way. Overhead an inextricable confusion of rugged shutters and iron balconies and chimney flues pushed out on brackets to save room and arched windows with projecting sills of Istrian stone and gleams of green leaves here and there where a fig tree branch escapes over a lower wall from some inner cortile \* leading the eye up to the narrow stream of blue sky high over all. *On each side a row of shops* as densely set as may be occupying in fact intervals between the square stone shafts about eight feet high which carry the first floors—intervals of which one is narrow and serves as a door the other is in the more respectable shops unscotched to the height of the counter and glazed above but in those of the poorer tradesmen left open to the ground and the wares laid on benches and tables in the open air the light in all cases entering at the front only and fading away in a few feet from the threshold into a gloom which the eye from without cannot penetrate but which is generally broken by a ray or two from a feeble lamp at the back.

of the shop, suspended before a print of the Virgin. The less pious shopkeeper sometimes leaves his lamp unlighted, and is contented with a penny print; the more religious one has his print coloured and set in a little shrine with a gilded or figured fringe, with perhaps a faded flower or two on each side, and his lamp burning brilliantly. Here, at the fruiterer's, where the dark-green water-melons are heaped upon the counter like cannon balls, the Madonna has a tabernacle of fresh laurel leaves; but the pewterer next door has let his lamp out, and there is nothing to be seen in his shop but the dull gleam of the studded patterns on the copper pans, hanging from his roof in the darkness. Next comes a "*Vendita Frittole e Liquori*,"\* where the Virgin, enthroned in a very humble manner beside a tallow candle on a back shelf, presides over certain ambrosial morsels of a nature too ambiguous to be defined or enumerated. But a few steps farther on, at the regular wineshop of the calle, where we are offered "*Vino Nostrani a Soldi 28.32*,"† the Madonna is in great glory enthroned above ten or a dozen large red casks of three-year-old vintage, and flanked by goodly ranks of bottles of Maraschino, and two crimson lamps; and for the evening, when the gondoliers will come to drink out, under her auspices, the money they have gained during the day, she will have a whole chandelier.

A yard or two farther, we pass the hostelry of the Black Eagle, and glancing as we pass, through the square door of marble, deeply moulded, in the outer wall, we see the shadows of its pergola of vines resting on an ancient well with a pointed shield carved on its side; and so presently emerge on the bridge and Campo San Moisè, whence to the entrance into St. Mark's Place, called the Bocca di Piazza (mouth of the square), the Venetian character is nearly destroyed,

\* Shop selling fried food and liquors.

† Nostrani wine at 28.32 Soldi.

first by the frightful façade of San Moisè which we will pause at another time to examine and then by the modernizing of the shops as they near the piazza and the mingling with the lower Venetian populace of lounging groups of English and Austrians. We will push fast through them into the shadow of the pillars at the end of the Bocca di Piazza and then we forget them all for between those pillars there opens a great light and in the midst of it as we advance slowly the vast tower of St. Mark seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level field of chequered stones and on each side the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us in the dark alley had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order and all their rude casements and broken walls had been transformed into arches charged with goodly sculpture and fluted shafts of delicate stone.

And well may they fall back for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision out of the earth and all the great square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe that we may see it far away—a multitude of pillars and white domes clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light—a treasure-heap it seems partly of gold and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches ceiled with fair mosaic and beset with sculpture of alabaster clear as amber and delicate as ivory—sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm leaves and lilies and grapes and pomegranates and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes and in the midst of it the solemn forms of angels sceptred and robed to the feet and leaning to each other across the gates their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them interrupted and dim like the

morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And around the walls of the porches there are set pillars of variegated stones, jasper and porphyry and deep-green serpentine spotted with flakes of snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, "their bluest veins to kiss" \*—the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the waved sand; their capitals rich with interwoven tracery, rooted knots of herbage, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs, all beginning and ending in the Cross; and above them, in the broad archivolts, a continuous chain of language and of life—angels, and the signs of heaven, and the labours of men, each in its appointed season upon the earth; and above these, another range of glittering pinnacles, mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers,—a confusion of delight, amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses † are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the St. Mark's lion, lifted on a blue field covered with stars, until at last, as if in ecstasy, the crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst.

Between that grim cathedral of England and this, what an interval! There is a type of it in the very birds that haunt them; for, instead of the restless crowd, hoarse-voiced and sable-winged, drifting on the bleak upper air, the St. Mark's porches are full of doves, that nestle among the marble foliage, and mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes,

\* *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act II. Sc. v.

† The four bronze horses, formerly gilt, and supposed to be of Greek workmanship, which were taken from Constantinople in 1204.

chugging at every motion with the tints hardly less lovely that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years

(*Stones of Venice* Vol II chap 4)

## The Old Tower of Calais Church

I cannot find words to express the intense pleasure I have always in first finding myself after some prolonged stay in England at the foot of the old tower of Calais church. The large respect the noble unsightliness of it — the record of its years written so visibly yet without sign of weakness or decay — its stern wasteness and gloom eaten away by the Channel winds and overgrown with the litter sea grasses, its slates and tiles all broken and rent and yet not falling — its desert of brickwork full of bolts and holes and ugly fissures and yet strong like a bare brown rock — its carelessness of what any one thinks or feels about it — putting forth no claim having no beauty or desirableness pride nor grace — yet neither asking for pity — not as ruins are useless and piteous feebly or fondly garrulous of better days — but useful still going through its own duly work — as some old fisherman beaten grey by storm yet drawing his daily nets — so it stands with no complaint about its past youth in blanchèd and meagre massiveness and serviceableness gathering human souls together underneath it — the sound of its bells for prayer still rolling through its rents — and the grey peak of it seen far across the sea principal of the three that rise above the waste of surfy sand and hallocked shore — the lighthouse of life and the bellry for labour and this for patience and praise

(*Modern Painters* Vol IV chap 1)

## The Bow of a Boat

Of all things, living or lifeless, upon this strange earth, there is but one which, having reached the mid-term of appointed human endurance on it, I still regard with unmitigated amazement. I know, indeed, that all round me is wonderful—but I cannot answer it with wonder: a dark veil, with the foolish words, NATURE OF THINGS, upon it, casts its deadening folds between me and their dazzling strangeness. Flowers open, and stars rise, and it seems to me they could have done no less. The mystery of distant mountain-blue only makes me reflect that the earth is of necessity mountainous;—the sea-wave breaks at my feet, and I do not see how it should have remained unbroken. But one object there is still, which I never pass without the renewed wonder of childhood, and that is the bow of a boat. Not of a racing-wherry, or revenue cutter, or clipper yacht; but the blunt head of a common, bluff, undecked sea-boat, lying aside in its furrow of beach sand. The sum of Navigation is in that. You may magnify it or decorate it as you will: you do not add to the wonder of it. Lengthen it into hatchet-like edge of iron,—strengthen it with complex tracery of ribs of oak,—carve it and gild it till a column of light moves beneath it on the sea,—you have made no more of it than it was at first. That rude simplicity of bent plank, that can breast its way through the death that is in the deep sea, has in it the soul of shipping. Beyond this, we may have more work, more men, more money; we cannot have more miracle.

For there is, first, an infinite strangeness in the perfection of the thing, as work of human hands. I know nothing else that man does, which is perfect, but that. All his other doings have some sign of weakness,



affectation or weak ignorance in them. They are overfinished or underfinished they do not answer their end or they show a mean vanity in answering it too well.

But the boat's bow is naively perfect complete without an effort. The man who made it knew not he was making anything beautiful as he bent its planks into those mysterious ever-changing curves. It grows under his hands into the image of a sea-shell the seal as it were of the flowing of the great tides and streams of ocean stamped on its delicate rounding. He leaves it when all is done without a boast. It is simple work but it will keep out water. And every plank thenceforward is a Fate and has men's lives wreathed in the knots of it as the cloth yard shaft had their deaths in its plumes.

Then also it is wonderful on account of the greatness of the thing accomplished. No other work of human hands ever gained so much. Steam-engines and telegraphs indeed help us to fetch and carry and talk they lift weights for us and bring messages with less trouble than would have been needed otherwise this saving of trouble however does not constitute a new faculty it only enhances the powers we already possess. But in that bow of the boat is the gift of another world. Without it what prison wall would be so strong as that white and wailing fringe of sea? What maimed creatures were we all chained to our rocks Andromeda like or wandering by the endless shores wasting our incommunicable strength and pining in hopeless watch of unconquerable waves! The nails that fasten together the planks of the boat's bow are the rivets of the fellowship of the world. Their iron does more than draw lightning out of heaven it leads love round the earth.

Then also it is wonderful on account of the greatness of the enemy it does battle with. To lift dead weight to overcome length of languid space to

multiply or systematize a given force ; this we may see done by the bar, or beam, or wheel, without wonder. But to war with that living fury of waters, to bare its breast, moment after moment, against the unwearied enmity of ocean,—the subtle, fitful, implacable smiting of the black waves, provoking each other on, endlessly, all the infinite march of the Atlantic rolling on behind them to their help,—and still to strike them back into a wreath of smoke and futile foam, and win its way against them, and keep its charge of life from them ;—does any other soulless thing do as much as this ?

*(Harbours of England.)*

### Fishing Boats on the Shore

I doubt if ever academic grove were half so fit for profitable meditation as the little strip of shingle between two black, steep, overhanging sides of stranded fishing-boats. The clear, heavy water-edge of ocean rising and falling close to their bows, in that unaccountable way which the sea has always in calm weather, turning the pebbles over and over as if with a rake, to look for something, and then stopping a moment down at the bottom of the bank, and coming up again with a little run and clash, throwing a foot's depth of salt crystal in an instant between you and the round stone you were going to take in your hand ; sighing, all the while, as if it would infinitely rather be doing something else. And the dark flanks of the fishing-boats all aslope above, in their shining quietness, hot in the morning sun, rusty and seamed with square patches of plank nailed over their rents ; just rough enough to let the little flat-footed fisher-children haul or twist themselves up to the gunwales, and drop back again along some stray rope ; just round enough to remind us, in their broad and gradual curves, of the

sweep of the green surges they know so well and of the hours when those old sides of scared timber all ashine with the sea plunge and dip into the deep green purity of the moulded waves more joyfully than a deer lies down among the grass of spring the soft white cloud of foam opening momentarily at the bows and fading or flying high into the breeze where the seagulls toss and shriek — the joy and beauty of it all the while so mingled with the sense of unfathomable danger and the human effort and sorrow going on perpetually from age to age waves rolling for ever and winds moaning for ever and faithful hearts trusting and sickening for ever and brave lives dashed away about the rattling beach like weeds for ever and still at the helm of every lonely boat through starless night and hopeless dawn \* His hand who spread the fisher's net over the dust of the Sidonian palaces and gave into the fisher's hand the keys of the kingdom of heaven †

*(Harbours of England)*

## Lichen and Mosses

Meek creatures † the first mercy of the earth veiling with hushed softness its dintless rocks — creatures full of pity covering with strange and tender honour the scarred disgrace of ruin — laying quiet finger on the trembling stones to teach them rest No words that I know of, will say what these mosses are None are delicate enough none perfect enough none rich enough How is one to tell of the rounded bosses of furred and beaming green — the starred divisions of rubied bloom fine-filmed as if the Rock Spirits could

\* These words suggested a title for the picture by Mr Frank Bramley A.R.A., "A Hopeless Dawn" now in the Tate Gallery

† Matt. xvi. 19

spin porphyry as we do glass,—the traceries of intricate silver, and fringes of amber, lustrous, arborescent, burnished through every fibre into fitful brightness and glossy traverses of silken change, yet all subdued and pensive, and framed for simplest, sweetest offices of grace? They will not be gathered, like the flowers, for chaplet or love token; but of these the wild bird will make its nest, and the wearied child his pillow.

And, as the earth's first mercy, so they are its last gift to us. When all other service is vain, from plant and tree, the soft mosses and grey lichen take up their watch by the headstone. The woods, the blossoms, the gift-bearing grasses, have done their parts for a time, but these do service for ever. Trees for the builder's yard, flowers for the bride's chamber, corn for the granary, moss for the grave.

Yet as in one sense the humblest, in another they are the most honoured of the earth-children. Unfading as motionless, the worm frets them not, and the autumn wastes not. Strong in lowliness, they neither blanch in heat nor pine in frost. To them, slow-fingered, constant-hearted, is entrusted the weaving of the dark eternal tapestries of the hills; to them, slow-pencilled, iris-dyed, the tender framing of their endless imagery. Sharing the stillness of the unimpassioned rock, they share also its endurance; and while the winds of departing spring scatter the white hawthorn blossom like drifted snow, and summer dims on the parched meadow the drooping of its cowslip-gold,—far above, among the mountains, the silver lichen-spots rest, star-like, on the stone; and the gathering orange-stain upon the edge of yonder western peak reflects the sunsets of a thousand years.

(*Modern Painters*, Vol. V. Pt. vi. chap. 10.)

## The River Rhône at Geneva

For all other rivers there is a surface and an underneath and a vaguely displeasing idea of the bottom. But the Rhône flows like one lambent jewel its surface is nowhere its ethereal self is everywhere, the iridescent rush and translucent strength of it blue to the shore and radiant to the depth.

Fifteen feet thick of not flowing but flying water not water neither —melted glacier rather one should call it the force of the ice is with it and the wreathing of the clouds the gladness of the sky and the continuance of Time.

Waves of clear sea are indeed lovely to watch but they are always coming or gone never in any taken shape to be seen for a second. But here was one mighty wave that was always itself and every fluted swirl of it constant as the wreathing of a shell. No wasting away of the fallen foam no pause for gathering of power no helpless ebb of discouraged recoil but alike through bright day and lulling night the never pausing plunge and never fading flash and never hushing whisper and while the sun was up the ever answering glow of unearthly aquamarine ultramarine violet blue gentian blue peacock blue river of paradise blue glass of a painted window melted in the sun and the witch of the Alps flinging the spun tresses of it for ever from her snow.

The innocent way too in which the river used to stop to look into every little corner. Great torrents always seem angry and great rivers too often sullen but there is no anger no disdain in the Rhône. It seemed as if the mountain stream was in mere bliss at recovering itself again out of the lake-sleep and raced because it rejoiced in racing fain yet to return and stay. There were pieces of wave that danced all

day as if Perdita \* were looking on to learn ; there were little streams that skipped like lambs and leaped like chamois ; there were pools that shook the sunshine all through them, and were rippled in layers of overlaid ripples, like crystal sand ; there were currents that twisted the light into golden braids, and inlaid the threads with turquoise enamel ; there were strips of stream that had certainly above the lake been millstreams, and were looking busily for mills to turn again ; there were shoots of stream that had once shot fearfully into the air, and now sprang up again laughing that they had only fallen a foot or two ;—and in the midst of all the gay glittering and eddied lingering, the noble bearing by of the midmost depth, so mighty, yet so terrorless and harmless, with its swallows skimming instead of petrels, and the dear old decrepit town as safe in the embracing sweep of it as if it were set in a brooch of sapphire.

(*Præterita*, Vol. II. chap. 5.)

### A Picture by Turner—"The Slave-Ship"

I think the noblest sea that Turner has ever painted, and, if so, the noblest certainly ever painted by man, is that of the *Slave-Ship*. . . . It is a sunset on the Atlantic, after prolonged storm ; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell—not high, nor local, but a low broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but

\* *Winter's Tale*, Act IV. Sc. iv. line 140.

glorious light the intense and lurid splendour which burns like gold and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley the tossing waves by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided lift themselves in dark indefinite fantastic forms each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere but three or four together in wild groups fitfully and furiously as the under strength of the swell compels or permits them leaving behind them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water now lighted with green and lamp-like fire now flashing back the gold of the declining sun now fearfully dyed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet and give to the reckless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying. Purple and blue the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of the night which gathers cold and low advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty \* ship as it labours amidst the lightning of the sea its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight and cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves incarnadines the multitudinous sea †

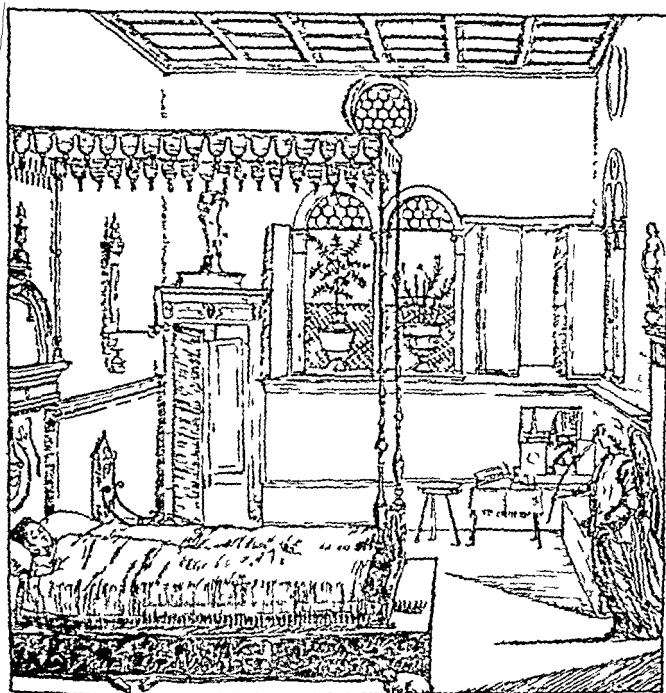
(*Modern Painters* Vol I Pt II Sec 5 chap 3)

### A Picture by Carpaccio—"The Dream of Saint Ursula"

In the year 1869 just before leaving Venice I had been carefully looking at a picture by Victor Carpaccio representing the dream of a young princess. Car

\* She is a slave throwing her slaves over board. The near sea is encumbered with corpses. (Note by Ruskin)

† *Macbeth*, Act II Sc. II



### THE DREAM OF ST. URSULA

*(From a pencil sketch by E. Heber Thompson, intended to show the general appearance and contents of the painting by Carpaccio)*



paccio has taken much pains to explain to us as far as he can the kind of life she leads by completely painting her little bedroom in the light of dawn so that you can see everything in it. It is lighted by two doubly arched windows the arches being painted crimson round their edges and the capitals of the shafts that bear them gilded. They are filled at the top with small round panes of glass but beneath are open to the blue morning sky with a low lattice across them and in the one at the back of the room are set two beautiful white Greek vases with a plant in each, one having rich dark and pointed green leaves the other crimson flowers but not of any species known to me each at the end of a branch like a spray of heath.

These flower pots stand on a shelf which runs all round the room and beneath the window at about the height of the elbow and serves to put things on anywhere beneath it down to the floor the walls are covered with green cloth but above are bare and white. The second window is nearly opposite the bed and in front of it is the princess's reading table some two feet and a half square covered by a red cloth with a white border and dainty fringe and beside it her seat not at all like a reading chair in Oxford but a very small three legged stool like a music stool covered with crimson cloth. On the table are a book set up at a slope fittest for reading and an hour glass. Under the shelf near the table so as to be easily reached by the outstretched arm is a press full of books. The door of this has been left open and the books I am grieved to say are rather in disorder having been pulled about before the princess went to bed and one left standing on its side.

Opposite this window on the white wall is a small shrine or picture (I can't see which for it is in sharp retiring perspective) with a lamp before it and a silver vessel hung from the lamp looking like one for holding incense.

The bed is a broad four-poster, the posts beautifully wrought golden or gilded rods, variously wreathed and branched, carrying a canopy of warm red. The princess's shield is at the head of it, and the feet are raised entirely above the floor of the room, on a dais that projects at the lower end so as to form a seat, on which the child has laid her crown. Her little blue slippers lie at the side of the bed,—her white dog beside them. The coverlid is scarlet, the white sheet folded half-way back over it; the young girl lies straight, bending neither at waist nor knee, the sheet rising and falling over her in a narrow unbroken wave, like the shape of the coverlid of the last sleep, when the turf scarcely rises. She is some seventeen or eighteen years old, her head is turned towards us on the pillow, the cheek resting on her hand, as if she were thinking, yet utterly calm in sleep, and almost colourless. Her hair is tied with a narrow riband, and divided into two wreaths, which encircle her head like a double crown. The white nightgown hides the arm raised on the pillow, down to the wrist.

At the door of the room an angel enters (the little dog, though lying awake, vigilant, takes no notice). He is a very small angel, his head just rises a little above the shelf round the room, and would only reach as high as the princess's chin, if she were standing up. He has soft grey wings, lustreless; and his dress, of subdued blue, has violet sleeves, open above the elbow, and showing white sleeves below. He comes in without haste, his body, like a mortal one, casting shadow from the light through the door behind, his face perfectly quiet; a palm-branch in his right hand—a scroll in his left.

So dreams the princess, with blessed eyes, that need no earthly dawn. It is very pretty of Carpaccio to make her dream out the angel's dress so particularly, and notice the slashed sleeves; and to dream so little an angel—very nearly a doll angel,—bringing her the

branch of palm and message But the lovely characteristic of all is the evident delight of her continual life Royal power over herself and happiness in her flowers her books her sleeping and waking her prayers her dreams her earth her heaven

After I had spent my morning over this picture I had to go to Verona by the afternoon train In the carriage with me were two American girls with their father and mother people of the class which has lately made so much money suddenly and does not know what to do with it and these two girls of about fifteen and eighteen had evidently been indulged in everything (since they had had the means) which western civilization could imagine And here they were specimens of the utmost which the money and invention of the nineteenth century could produce in maidenhood — children of its most progressive race — enjoying the full advantages of political liberty of enlightened philosophical education of cheap pulpered literature and of luxury at any cost Whatever money machinery or freedom of thought could do for these two children had been done No superstition had debarred no restraint degraded them — types they could not but be of maidenly wisdom and felicity as conceived by the forwardest intellects of our time

And they were travelling through a district which if any in the world should touch the heart and delight the eyes of young girls Between Venice and Verona ! Portia's villa perhaps in sight upon the Brenta Juliet's tomb to be visited in the evening — blue against the southern sky the hills of Petrarch's home Exquisite midsummer sunshine with low rays glanced through the vine leaves all the Alps were clear from the Lake of Garda to Cadore and to farthest Tyrol What a princess's chamber this if these are princesses and what dreams might they not dream therein !

But the two American girls were neither princesses, nor seers, nor dreamers. By infinite self-indulgence, they had reduced themselves simply to two pieces of white putty that could feel pain. The flies and the dust stuck to them as to clay, and they perceived, between Venice and Verona, nothing but the flies and the dust. They pulled down the blinds the moment they entered the carriage, and then sprawled, and writhed, and tossed among the cushions of it, in vain contest, during the whole fifty miles, with every miserable sensation of bodily affliction that could make time intolerable. They were dressed in thin white frocks, coming vaguely open at the backs as they stretched or wriggled; they had French novels, lemons, and lumps of sugar, to beguile their state with; the novels hanging together by the ends of string that had once stitched them, or adhering at the corners in densely bruised dog's-ears, out of which the girls, wetting their fingers, occasionally extricated a gluey leaf. From time to time they cut a lemon open, ground a lump of sugar backwards and forwards over it till every fibre was in a treacly pulp; then sucked the pulp, and gnawed the white skin into leathery strings for the sake of its bitter. Only one sentence was exchanged, in the fifty miles, on the subject of things outside the carriage (the Alps being once visible from a station where they had drawn up the blinds).

"Don't those snow-caps make you cool?"

"No—I wish they did."

And so they went their way, with sealed eyes and tormented limbs, their numbered miles of pain.

There are the two states for you, in clearest opposition; Blessed, and Accursed. The happy industry, and eyes full of sacred imagination of things that are not . . . and the tortured indolence, and infidel eyes, blind even to the things that are.

(*Fors Clavigera*, Letter 20.)

## CRITICAL AND APPRECIATIVE PASSAGES

### LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

#### On Books and Reading

GRANTING that we had both the will and the sense to choose our friends well, how few of us have the power or at least how limited for most is the sphere of choice! Nearly all our associations are determined by chance or necessity and restricted within a narrow circle. We cannot know whom we would and those whom we know we cannot have at our side when we most need them. All the higher circles of human intelligence are to those beneath only momentarily and partially open. We may by good fortune obtain a glimpse of a great poet and hear the sound of his voice or put a question to a man of science and be answered good humouredly. We may intrude ten minutes talk on a cabinet minister answered probably with words worse than silence being deceptive or snatch once or twice in our lives the privilege of throwing a bouquet in the path of a princess or arresting the kind glance of a queen. And yet these momentary chances we covet and spend our years and passions and powers in pursuit of little more than these while meantime there is a society continually open to us of people who will talk to us as long as we like whatever our rank or occupation — talk to us in the best words they can choose and with thanks if

we listen to them. And this society, because it is so numerous and so gentle,—and can be kept waiting round us all day long, not to grant audience, but to gain it,—kings and statesmen lingering patiently in those plainly furnished and narrow anterooms, our bookcase shelves,—we make no account of that company,—perhaps never listen to a word they would say, all day long !

You may tell me, perhaps, or think within yourselves, that the apathy with which we regard this company of the noble, who are praying us to listen to them, and the passion with which we pursue the company, probably of the ignoble, who despise us, or who have nothing to teach us, are grounded in this,—that we can see the faces of the living men, and it is themselves, and not their sayings, with which we desire to become familiar. But it is not so. Suppose you never were to see their faces,—suppose you could be put behind a screen in the statesman's cabinet, or the prince's chamber, would you not be glad to listen to their words, though you were forbidden to advance beyond the screen ? And when the screen is only a little less, folded in two instead of four, and you can be hidden behind the cover of the two boards that bind a book, and listen all day long, not to the casual talk, but to the studied, determined, chosen addresses of the wisest of men ;—this station of audience, and honourable privy council, you despise !

But perhaps you will say that it is because the living people talk of things that are passing, and are of immediate interest to you, that you desire to hear them. Nay ; that cannot be so, for the living people will themselves tell you about passing matters much better in their writings than in their careless talk. But I admit that this motive does influence you, so far as you prefer those rapid and ephemeral writings to slow and enduring writings—books, properly so called. For all books are divisible into two classes, the books

of the hour and the books of all time. Mark this distinction—it is not one of quality only. It is not merely the bad book that does not last and the good one that does. It is a distinction of species. There are good books for the hour and bad ones for all time. I must define the two kinds before I go farther.

The good book of the hour then—I do not speak of the bad ones—is simply the useful or pleasant talk of some person whom you cannot otherwise converse with printed for you. Very useful often telling you what you need to know. Very pleasant often as a sensible friend's present talk would be. These bright accounts of travels. good humoured and witty discussions of question. lively or pathetic story telling by the real agents concerned in the events of passing history—all these books of the hour multiplying among us as education becomes more general are a peculiar characteristic and possession of the present age. we ought to be entirely thankful for them and entirely ashamed of ourselves if we make no good use of them. But we make the worst possible use if we allow them to usurp the place of true books. for strictly speaking they are not books at all but merely letters or newspapers in good print. Our friend's letter may be delightful or necessary to-day whether worth keeping or not is to be considered. The newspaper may be entirely proper at breakfast time but assuredly it is not reading for all day. So though bound up in a volume the long letter which gives you so pleasant an account of the inns and roads and weather last year at such and such a place or which tells you that amusing story or gives you the real circumstances of such and such events however valuable for occasional reference may not be in the real sense of the word a book at all nor in the real sense to be read. A book is essentially not a talked thing but a written thing and written not with the view of mere communication but of perma-

nence. The book of talk is printed only because its author cannot speak to thousands of people at once ; if he could, he would—the volume is mere *multiplication* of his voice. You cannot talk to your friend in India ; if you could, you would ; you write instead : that is mere *conveyance* of voice. But a book is written not to multiply the voice merely, but preserve it. The author has something to say which he perceives to be useful, or helpfully beautiful. So far as he knows, no one has yet said it ; so far as he knows, no one else can say it. He is bound to say it, clearly and melodiously if he may ; clearly, at all events. In the sum of his life he finds this to be the thing, or group of things, manifest to him ;—this the piece of true knowledge, or sight, which his share of sunshine and earth has permitted him to seize. He would fain set it down for ever ; engrave it on a rock, if he could ; saying, " This is the best of me ; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved, and hated, like another ; my life was as the vapour, and is not ; but this I saw and knew : this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory." That is his " writing " : it is, in his small human way, and with whatever degree of true inspiration is in him, his inscription, or scripture. That is a " Book."

Perhaps you think no books were ever so written ?

But, again, I ask you, do you at all believe in honesty, or at all in kindness ? or do you think there is never any honesty or benevolence in wise people ? None of us, I hope, are so unhappy as to think that. Well, whatever bit of a wise man's work is honestly and benevolently done, that bit is his book, or his piece of art. It is mixed always with evil fragments—ill-done, redundant, affected work. But if you read rightly, you will easily discover the true bits, and those *are* the book.

Now books of this kind have been written in all ages by their greatest men :—by great leaders, and great thinkers. These are all at your choice ; and life is



short You have heard as much before —yet have you measured and mapped out this short life and its possibilities? Do you know if you read this that you cannot read that—that what you lose to-day you can not gain to-morrow? Will you go and gossip with your housemaid or your stable-boy when you may talk with queens and kings or flatter yourselves that it is with any worthy consciousness of your own claims to respect that you jostle with the common crowd for entree here and audience there when all the while this eternal court is open to you with its society wide as the world multitudinous as its days the chosen and the mighty of every place and time? Into that you may enter always in that you may take fellowship and rank according to your wish from that once entered into it you can never be outcast but by your own fault by your aristocracy of companionship there your own inherent aristocracy will be assuredly tested and the motives with which you strive to take high place in the society of the living measured as to all the truth and sincerity that are in them by the place you desire to take in this company of the Dead

The place you desire and the place you *fit yourself for* I must also say because observe this court of the past differs from all living aristocracy in this it is open to labour and to merit but to nothing else No wealth will bribe no name overawe no artifice deceive the guardian of those Elysian gates In the deep sense no vile or vulgar person ever enters there At the portières of that silent Laubourg St Germain there is but brief question Do you deserve to enter? Pass Do you ask to be the companion of nobles? Make yourself noble and you shall be Do you long for the conversation of the wise? Learn to understand it and you shall hear it But on other terms?—no If you will not rise to us we cannot stoop to you The living lord may assume courtesy

the living philosopher explain his thought to you with considerate pain ; but here we neither feign nor interpret ; you must rise to the level of our thoughts if you would be gladdened by them, and share our feelings, if you would recognize our presence."

This, then, is what you have to do, and I admit that it is much. You must, in a word, love these people, if you are to be among them. No ambition is of any use. They scorn your ambition. You must love them, and show your love in these two following ways.

First, by a true desire to be taught by them, and to enter into their thoughts. To enter into theirs, observe ; not to find your own expressed by them. If the person who wrote the book is not wiser than you, you need not read it ; if he be, he will think differently from you in many respects.

Very ready we are to say of a book, "How good this is—that's exactly what I think!" But the right feeling is, "How strange that is! I never thought of that before, and yet I see it is true ; or if I do not now, I hope I shall, some day." But whether thus submissively or not, at least be sure that you go to the author to get at *his* meaning, not to find yours. Judge it afterwards, if you think yourself qualified to do so ; but ascertain it first. And be sure also, if the author is worth anything, that you will not get at his meaning all at once ;—nay, that at his whole meaning you will not for a long time arrive in any wise. Not that he does not say what he means, and in strong words too ; but he cannot say it all ; and what is more strange, *will* not, but in a hidden way and in parables, in order that he may be sure you want it. I cannot quite see the reason of this, nor analyse that cruel reticence in the breasts of wise men which makes them always hide their deeper thought. They do not give it to you by way of help, but of reward, and will make themselves sure that you deserve it before they allow you to reach it. But it is the same with the

physical type of wisdom gold. There seems to you and me no reason why the electric forces of the earth should not carry whatever there is of gold within it at once to the mountain tops so that kings and people might know that all the gold they could get was there and without any trouble of digging or anxiety or chance or waste of time cut it away and coin as much as they needed. But Nature does not manage it so. She puts it in little fissures in the earth nobody knows where. You may dig long and find none. You must dig painfully to find any.

And it is just the same with men's best wisdom. When you come to a good book you must ask yourself: 'Am I inclined to work as an Australian miner would? Are my pickaxes and shovels in good order and am I in good trim myself, my sleeves well up to the elbow and my breath good and my temper?' And keeping the figure a little longer even at cost of tiresomeness for it is a thoroughly useful one the metal you are in search of being the author's mind or meaning his word are as the rock which you have to crush and smelt in order to get at it. And your pickaxes are your own care, wit and learning; your smelting furnace is your own thoughtful soul. Do not hope to get at any good author's meaning without those tools and that fire: often you will need sharpest, finest chiselling and patientest fusing before you can gather one grain of the metal.

And therefore first of all I tell you earnestly and authoritatively (I know I am right in this) you must get into the habit of looking intensely at words and assuring yourself of their meaning syllable by syllable—nay letter by letter. For though it is only by reason of the opposition of letters in the function of signs to sounds in the function of signs that the study of books is called literature and that a man versed in it is called by the consent of nations a man of letters instead of a man of books or of words.

you may yet connect with that accidental nomenclature this real fact :—that you might read all the books in the British Museum (if you could live long enough), and remain an utterly “illiterate,” uneducated person ; but that if you read ten pages of a good book, letter by letter,—that is to say, with real accuracy,—you are for evermore in some measure an educated person. The entire difference between education and non-education (as regards the merely intellectual part of it) consists in this accuracy. A well-educated gentleman may not know many languages,—may not be able to speak any but his own,—may have read very few books. But whatever language he knows, he knows precisely ; whatever word he pronounces he pronounces rightly ; above all he is learned in the *peerage* of words ; knows the words of true descent and ancient blood, at a glance, from words of modern canaille ; remembers all their ancestry, their inter-marriages, distantest relationships, and the extent to which they were admitted, and offices they held, among the national noblesse of words at any time, and in any country. But an uneducated person may know by memory any number of languages, and talk them all, and yet not know a word of any,—not a word even of his own. An ordinarily clever and sensible seaman will be able to make his way ashore at most ports ; yet he has only to speak a sentence of any language to be known for an illiterate person : so also the accent, or turn of expression of a single sentence will at once mark a scholar. And this is so strongly felt, so conclusively admitted, by educated persons, that a false accent or mistaken syllable is enough, in the Parliament of any civilized nation, to assign to a man a certain degree of inferior standing for ever.

And this is right ; but it is a pity that the accuracy insisted on is not greater, and required to a serious purpose. It is right that a false Latin quantity should

excite a smile in the House of Commons, but it is wrong that a false English meaning should *not* excite a frown there. Let the accent of words be watched, by all means; but let their meaning be watched more closely still, and fewer will do the work. A few words well chosen and distinguished will do work that a thousand cannot when every one is acting equivocally in the function of another. Yes, and words, if they are not watched, will do deadly work sometimes. There are masked words droning and skulking about us in Europe just now — (there never were so many, owing to the spreading of a shallow blotching blundering infectious information or rather deformation everywhere and to the teaching of catechisms and phrases at school instead of human meanings) — there are masked words abroad I say which nobody understands but which everybody uses and most people will also fight for live for or even die for, fancying they mean this or that or the other of things dear to them for such words wear chameleon cloaks — ground lion cloaks\* of the colour of the ground of any man's fancy on that ground they lie in wait and rend him with a spring from it. There were never creatures of prey so mischievous never diplomatists so cunning never poisoners so deadly as these masked words they are the unjust stewards of all men's ideas whatever fancy or favourite instinct a man most cherishes he gives to his favourite masked word to take care of for him the word at last comes to have an infinite power over him — you cannot get at him but by its ministry.

And in languages so mongrel in breed as the English there is a fatal power of equivocation put into men's hands almost whether they will or no in being able to use Greek or Latin forms for a word when they

\* A translation of chameleon *χamæl* on the ground, and *λίον*, a lion.

want it to be respectable, and Saxon or otherwise common forms when they want to discredit it. . . .

Now, in order to deal with words rightly, this is the habit you must form. Nearly every word in your language has been first a word of some other language—of Saxon, German, French, Latin, or Greek (not to speak of eastern and primitive dialects). And many words have been all these ;—that is to say, have been Greek first, Latin next, French or German next, and English last : undergoing a certain change of sense and use on the lips of each nation ; but retaining a deep vital meaning which all good scholars feel in employing them, even at this day. If you do not know the Greek alphabet, learn it ; young or old—girl or boy—whoever you may be, if you think of reading seriously (which, of course, implies that you have some leisure at command), learn your Greek alphabet ; then get good dictionaries of all these languages, and whenever you are in doubt about a word, hunt it down patiently. Read Max Muller's lectures\* thoroughly, to begin with ; and, after that, never let a word escape you that looks suspicious. And the general gain to your character, in power and precision, will be quite incalculable.

Mind, this does not imply knowing, or trying to know, Greek, or Latin, or French. It takes a whole life to learn any language perfectly. But you can easily ascertain the meanings through which the English word has passed ; and those which in a good writer's work it must still bear.

And now, merely for example's sake, I will, with your permission, read a few lines of a true book with you, carefully ; and see what will come out of them. I will take a book perfectly known to you all ; no English words are more familiar to us, yet nothing

\* *Lectures on the Science of Language.*

perhaps has been less read with sincerity I will take these few following lines of *Lycidas*

Last came and last did go  
The plot of the Galilean lake  
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain  
(The golden opens the iron shuts again)  
He shook his mitred locks and stern bespake  
How well could I have spared for thee young swain  
Know of such as for their bellies sake  
Creep and intrude and climb into the fold!  
Of other care they little reckoning make  
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast  
And shove away the worthy bidden guest  
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold  
A sheep-hook or have learn'd aught else the least  
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!  
What recks it them? What need the? They are  
sped  
And when they list their lean and flashy songs  
Crute on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw  
The hungry sheep look up and are not fed  
But swain with wind and the rank must they draw  
Rot inwardly and foul contagion spread  
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
Daily devours apace and nothing said

Let us think over this passage and examine its words

First is it not singular to find Milton assigning to St. Peter not only his full episcopal function but the very types of it which Protestants usually refuse most passionately? His 'mitred locks'! Milton was no Bishop-lover how comes St. Peter to be 'mitred'?

Two massy keys he bore Is this then the power of the keys claimed by the Bishops of Rome and is it acknowledged here by Milton only in a poetical licence for the sake of its picturesqueness that he may get the gleam of the golden keys to help his effect?

Do not think it Great men do not play stage tricks with the doctrines of life and death only little men do

that. Milton means what he says ; and means it with his might too—is going to put the whole strength of his spirit presently into the saying of it. For though not a lover of false bishops, he *was* a lover of true ones ; and the Lake-pilot is here, in his thoughts, the type and head of true episcopal power. For Milton reads that text, " I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven " quite honestly. Puritan though he be, he would not blot it out of the book because there have been bad bishops ; nay, in order to understand *him*, we must understand that verse first ; it will not do to eye it askance, or whisper it under our breath, as if it were a weapon of an adverse sect. It is a solemn, universal assertion, deeply to be kept in mind by all sects. But perhaps we shall be better able to reason on it if we go on a little farther, and come back to it. For clearly, this marked insistence on the power of the true episcopate is to make us feel more weightily what is to be charged against the false claimants of episcopate ; or generally, against false claimants of power and rank in the body of the clergy, they who, " for their bellies' sake, creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold "

Never think Milton uses those three words to fill up his verse, as a loose writer would. He needs all the three, especially those three, and no more than those—" creep," and " intrude," and " climb " ; no other words would or could serve the turn, and no more could be added. For they exhaustively comprehend the three classes, correspondent to the three characters, of men who dishonestly seek ecclesiastical power. First, those who " creep " into the fold ; who do not care for office, nor name, but for secret influence, and do all things occultly and cunningly, consenting to any servility of office or conduct, so only that they may intimately discern, and unawares direct, the minds of men. Then those who " intrude " (thrust, that is) themselves into the fold, who by



natural insolence of heart and stout eloquence of tongue and fearlessly perseverant self assertion obtain hearing and authority with the common crowd. Lastly those who climb who by labour and learning both stout and sound but selfishly exerted in the cause of their own ambition gain high dignities and authorities and become lords over the heritage though not ensamples to the flock.

Now go on

Of other care they little reckoning make  
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast  
Blind mouths——

I pause again for this is a strange expression a broken metaphor one might think careless and unscholarly

Not so its very audacity and pitilessness are intended to make us look close at the phrase and remember it. Those two monosyllables express the precisely accurate contraries of right character in the two great offices of the Church—those of bishop and pastor

A Bishop means a person who sees

A Pastor means one who feeds

The most unbishoply character a man can have is therefore to be Blind

The most unpastoral thing is instead of feeding to want to be fed—to be a Mouth

Take the two reverses together and you have blind mouth. We may advisably follow out this idea a little. Nearly all the evils in the Church have arisen from bishops desiring *power* more than *light*. They want authority not outlook. Whereas their real office is not to rule though it may be vigorously to exhort and rebuke it is the king's office to rule the bishop's office is to *oversee* the flock to number it sheep by sheep to be ready always to give full

account of it. Now it is clear he cannot give account of the souls, if he has not so much as numbered the bodies of his flock. The first thing, therefore, that a bishop has to do is at least to put himself in a position in which, at any moment, he can obtain the history from childhood of every living soul in his diocese, and of its present state. Down in that back street, Bill, and Nancy, knocking each other's teeth out!—Does the Bishop know all about it? Has he his eye upon them? Has he *had* his eye upon them? Can he circumstantially explain to us how Bill got into the habit of beating Nancy about the head? If he cannot, he is no bishop, though he had a mitre as high as Salisbury steeple; he is no bishop,—he has sought to be at the helm instead of the masthead; he has no sight of things. “Nay,” you say, “it is not his duty to look after Bill in the back street.” What! the fat sheep that have full fleeces—you think it is only those he should look after, while (go back to your Milton) “the hungry sheep look up, and are not fed, besides what the grim wolf, with privy paw” (bishops knowing nothing about it) “daily devours apace, and nothing said?”

“But that’s not our idea of a bishop.” Perhaps not; but it was St. Paul’s; \* and it was Milton’s. They may be right, or we may be; but we must not think we are reading either one or the other by putting our meaning into their words.

I go on:

“But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw.”

This is to meet the vulgar answer that “if the poor are not looked after in their bodies, they are in their souls; they have spiritual food.”

And Milton says, “They have no such thing as

\* See Acts xx. 28.

spiritual food they are only swollen with wind. At first you may think that is a coarse type and an obscure one. But again it is quite a literally accurate one. Take up your Latin and Greek dictionaries and find out the meaning of Spirit. It is only a contraction of the Latin word *breath* and an indistinct translation of the Greek word for *wind*. The same word is used in writing. The wind bloweth where it listeth and in writing. So is every one that is born of the Spirit—born of the *breath* that is for it means the breath of God in soul and body. We have the true sense of it in our words—*inspiration* and *expire*. Now there are two kinds of breath with which the flock may be filled—God's breath and man's. The breath of God is health and life and peace to them as the air of heaven is to the flocks on the hills—but man's breath—the word which *he* calls spiritual—is disease and contagion to them as the fog of the fen. They rot inwardly with it—they are puffed up by it as a dead body by the vapours of its own decomposition. This is literally true of all false religious teaching—the first and last and fatallest sign of it is that puffing up. Your converted children who teach their parents—your converted convicts who teach honest men—your converted dunces who having lived in cretinous stupefaction half their lives suddenly awaking to the fact of there being a God fancy themselves therefore His peculiar people and messengers—your sectarians of every species small and great Catholic or Protestant of high church or low in so far as they think themselves exclusively in the right and others wrong—and pre-eminently in every sect those who hold that men can be saved by thinking rightly instead of doing rightly by word instead of act and wish instead of work—these are the true fog children—clouds these without water—bodies these of putrescent vapour and skin without blood or flesh—blown bagpipes for

the fiends to pipe with—corrupt, and corrupting,—  
 “Swollen with wind, and the rank mist they draw.”

Lastly, let us return to the lines respecting the power of the keys, for now we can understand them. Note the difference between Milton and Dante in their interpretation of this power: for once, the latter is weaker in thought; he supposes *both* the keys to be of the gate of heaven; one is of gold, the other of silver: they are given by St. Peter to the sentinel angel; and it is not easy to determine the meaning either of the substances of the three steps of the gate, or of the two keys. But Milton makes one, of gold, the key of heaven; the other, of iron, the key of the prison, in which the wicked teachers are to be bound who “have taken away the key of knowledge, yet entered not in themselves.”

We have seen that the duties of bishop and pastor are to see, and feed; and, of all who do so, it is said, “He that watereth, shall be watered also himself.” But the reverse is truth also. He that watereth not, shall be *withered* himself; and he that seeth not, shall himself be shut out of sight,—shut into the perpetual prison-house. And that prison opens here, as well as hereafter: he who is bound in heaven must first be bound on earth. That command to the strong angels, of which the rock-apostle is the image, “Take him, and bind him hand and foot, and cast him out,” \* issues, in its measure, against the teacher, for every help withheld, and for every truth refused, and for every falsehood enforced; so that he is more strictly fettered the more he fetters, and farther outcast, as he more and more misleads, till at last the bars of the iron cage close upon him, and as “the golden opes, the iron shuts amain.”

We have got something out of the lines, I think, and much more is yet to be found in them; but we have

done enough by way of example of the kind of word by word examination of your author which is rightly called reading—watching every accent and expression and putting ourselves always in the author's place annihilating our own personality and seeking to enter into his—so as to be able assuredly to say

Thus Milton thought not Thus I thought in misreading Milton. And by this process you will gradually come to attach less weight to your own

Thus I thought at other times. You will begin to perceive that what you thought was a matter of no serious importance—that your thoughts on any subject are not perhaps the clearest and wisest that could be arrived at thereupon—in fact that unless you are a very singular person you cannot be said to have any thoughts at all that you have no materials for them in any serious matters—no right to

think but only to try to learn more of the facts. Nay most probably all your life (unless as I said you are a singular person) you will have no legitimate right to an opinion on any business except that instantly under your hand. What must of necessity be done you can always find out beyond question how to do. Have you a house to keep in order a commodity to sell a field to plough a ditch to cleanse? There need be no two opinions about these proceedings—it is at your peril if you have not much more than an opinion on the way to manage such matters. And also outside of your own business there are one or two subjects on which you are bound to have but one opinion. That roguery and lying are objectionable and are instantly to be flogged out of the way whenever discovered—that covetousness and love of quarrelling are dangerous dispositions even in children and deadly dispositions in men and nations—that in the end the God of heaven and earth loves active modest and kind people, and hates idle proud greedy and cruel ones—on these general

facts you are bound to have but one, and that a very strong, opinion. For the rest, respecting religions, governments, sciences, arts, you will find that, on the whole, you can know NOTHING,—judge nothing ; that the best you can do, even though you may be a well-educated person, is to be silent, and strive to be wiser every day, and to understand a little more of the thoughts of others, which so soon as you try to do honestly, you will discover that the thoughts even of the wisest are very little more than pertinent questions. To put the difficulty into a clear shape, and exhibit to you the grounds for indecision, that is all they can generally do for you !—and well for them and for us, if indeed they are able “ to mix the music with our thoughts, and sadden us with heavenly doubts.” This writer, from whom I have been reading to you, is not among the first or wisest : he sees shrewdly as far as he sees, and therefore it is easy to find out his full meaning ; but with the greater men, you cannot fathom their meaning ; they do not even wholly measure it themselves,—it is so wide. Suppose I had asked you, for instance, to seek for Shakespeare’s opinion, instead of Milton’s, on this matter of Church authority ?—or for Dante’s ? Have any of you, at this instant, the least idea what either thought about it ? Have you ever balanced the scene with the bishops in *Richard III.* against the character of Cranmer ? the description of St. Francis and St. Dominic against that of him who made Virgil wonder to gaze upon him,—“ disteso, tanto vilmente, nell’ eterno esilio ; ” or of him whom Dante stood beside, “ come ’l frate che confessa lo perfido assassin ? ” \* Shakespeare and Alighieri knew men better than most of us, I presume ! They were both in the midst of the main struggle between the temporal and spiritual powers. They had an opinion, we may guess ? But where is it ? Bring it into

\* Caiaphas and Pope Nicholas III. (*Inferno* xix. ; xxii. ; xxiii )  
For St. Francis and St. Dominic see *Paradiso* xi. and xii.  
(2,847)

court! Put Shakespeare's or Dante's creed into articles and send *that* up into the Ecclesiastical Courts!

You will not be able I tell you again for many and many a day to come at the real purposes and teaching of these great men—but a very little honest study of them will enable you to perceive that what you took for your own judgment was mere chance prejudice and drifted helpless entangled weed of castaway thought—now you will see that most men's minds are indeed little better than rough heath wilderness neglected and stubborn partly barren partly overgrown with pestilent brakes and venomous wind-sown herbage of evil surmise—that the first thing you have to do for them and yourself is eagerly and scornfully to set fire to *this*—burn all the jungle into wholesome ash heaps and then plough and sow—All the true literary work before you for life must begin with obedience to that order—Break up your fallow ground and sow *not* among *thorns*

(*Sesame and Lilies* Lecture I Of  
Kings' Treasures)

## The Power and Place of Women in Literature

Let us try then whether we cannot get at some clear and harmonious idea (it must be harmonious if it is true) of what womanly mind and virtue are in power and office with respect to man's—and how their relations rightly accepted aid and increase the vigour and honour and authority of both.

And now I must repeat one thing I said in the last lecture—namely that the first use of education was to enable us to consult the wisest and the greatest men on all points of earnest difficulty—That to use books rightly, was to go to them for help—to appeal

to them, when our own knowledge and power of thought failed ; to be led by them into wider sight, purer conception than our own, and receive from them the united sentence of the judges and councils of all time, against our solitary and unstable opinion.

Let us do this now. Let us see whether the greatest, the wisest, the purest-hearted of all ages are agreed in any wise on this point : let us hear the testimony they have left respecting what they held to be the true dignity of woman, and her mode of help to man.

And first let us take Shakespeare.

Note broadly in the outset, Shakespeare has no heroes ;—he has only heroines. There is not one entirely heroic figure in all his plays, except the slight sketch of Henry the Fifth, exaggerated for the purpose of the stage ; and the still slighter Valentine in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In his laboured and perfect plays you have no hero. Othello would have been one, if his simplicity had not been so great as to leave him the prey of every base practice round him ; but he is the only example even approximating to the heroic type. Coriolanus—Cæsar—Antony, stand in flawed strength, and fall by their vanities,—Hamlet is indolent, and drowsily speculative ; Romeo an impatient boy ; the Merchant of Venice languidly submissive to adverse fortune ; Kent, in *King Lear*, is entirely noble at heart, but too rough and unpolished to be of true use at the critical time, and he sinks into the office of a servant only. Orlando, no less noble, is yet the despairing toy of chance, followed, comforted, saved, by Rosalind. Whereas there is hardly a play that has not a perfect woman in it, steadfast in grave hope, and errorless purpose : Cordelia, Desdemona, Isabella, Hermione, Imogen, Queen Katherine, Perdita, Sylvia, Viola, Rosalind, Helena, and last, and perhaps loveliest, Virgilia, are all faultless ; conceived in the highest heroic type of humanity.

Then observe secondly,



The catastrophe of every play is caused always by the folly or fault of a man—the redemption if there be any is by the wisdom and virtue of a woman—and failing that there is none. The catastrophe of *King Lear* is owing to his own want of judgment, his impatient vanity, his misunderstanding of his children: the virtue of his only true daughter would have saved him from all the injuries of the others unless he had cast her away from him—as it is she all but saves him.

Of *Othello* I need not trace the tale—nor the one weakness of his so mighty love—nor the inferiority of his perceptive intellect to that even of the second woman character in the play, the *Emilia* who dies in wild testimony against his error—“Oh murderer us coxcomb!” What should such a fool do with so good a wife?

In *Romeo and Juliet* the wise and entirely brave stratagem of the wife is brought to ruinous issue by the reckless impatience of her husband. In *Winter's Tale* and in *Cymbeline* the happiness and existence of two princely households lost through long years and imperilled to the death by the folly and obstinacy of the husbands are redeemed at last by the queenly patience and wisdom of the wives. In *Measure for Measure* the injustice of the judges and the corrupt cowardice of the broker are opposed to the victorious truth and adamant purity of a woman. In *Coriolanus* the mother's counsel acted upon in time would have saved her son from all evil—his momentary forgetfulness of it is his ruin—her prayer at last granted saves him—not indeed from death but from the curse of living as the destroyer of his country.

And what shall I say of *Julia*—constant against the fickleness of a lover who is a mere wicked child?—of *Helena*—against the petulance and insult of a careless youth?—of the patience of *Hero*—the passion of *Beatrice*—and the calmly devoted wisdom of the unlessoned girl—who appears among the helplessness,

the blindness, and the vindictive passions of men, as a gentle angel, to save merely by her presence, and defeat the worst intensities of crime by her smile?

Observe, farther, among all the principal figures in Shakespeare's plays, there is only one weak woman—Ophelia; and it is because she fails Hamlet at the critical moment, and is not, and cannot in her nature be, a guide to him when he needs her most, that all the bitter catastrophe follows. Finally, though there are three wicked women among the principal figures, Lady Macbeth, Regan, and Goneril, they are felt at once to be frightful exceptions to the ordinary laws of life; fatal in their influence also in proportion to the power for good which they have abandoned.

Such, in broad light, is Shakespeare's testimony to the position and character of women in human life. He represents them as infallibly faithful and wise counsellors,—incorruptibly just and pure examples—strong always to sanctify, even when they cannot save.

Not as in any wise comparable in knowledge of the nature of man,—still less in his understanding of the causes and courses of fate,—but only as the writer who has given us the broadest view of the conditions and modes of ordinary thought in modern society, I ask you next to receive the witness of Walter Scott.

I put aside his merely romantic prose writing as of no value: and though the early romantic poetry is very beautiful, its testimony is of no weight, other than that of a boy's ideal. But his true works, studied from Scottish life, bear a true witness, and in the whole range of these there are but three men who reach the heroic type—Dandie Dinmont, Rob Roy, and Claverhouse: of these, one is a border farmer; another a freebooter; the third a soldier in a bad cause. And these touch the ideal of heroism only in their courage and faith, together with a strong, but uncultivated, or mistakenly applied, intellectual power; while his younger men are the gentlemanly playthings of far-

tastic fortune and only by aid (or accident) of that fortune survive not vanquish the trials they involuntarily sustain. Of any disciplined or consistent character earnest in a purpose wisely conceived or dealing with forms of hostile evil definitely challenged and resolutely subdued there is no trace in his conceptions of men. Whereas in his imaginations of women—in the characters of Ellen Douglas of Flora Maciver Rose Bradwardine Catherine Seyton Diana Vernon Lillias Redgauntlet Alice Bridgenorth Alice Lee and Jeanie Deans—with endless varieties of grace tenderness and intellectual power we find in all a quite infallible and inevitable sense of dignity and justice a fearless instant and untiring self-sacrifice to even the appearance of duty much more to its real claims and finally a patient wisdom of deeply restrained affection which does infinitely more than protect its objects from a momentary error—it gradually forms animates and exalts the characters of the unworthy lovers until at the close of the tale we are just able and no more to take patience in hearing of their unmerited success.

So that in all cases with Scott as with Shakespeare it is the woman who watches over teaches and guides the youth—it is never by any chance the youth who watches over or educates his mistress.

Next take though more briefly graver and deeper testimony—that of the great Italians and Greeks. You know well the plan of Dante's great poem—that it is a love-poem to his dead lady a song of praise for her watch over his soul. Stooping only to pity never to love she yet saves him from destruction—saves him from hell. He is going eternally astray in despair she comes down from heaven to his help and throughout the ascents of Paradise is his teacher interpreting for him the most difficult truths divine and human and leading him with rebuke upon rebuke from star to star.

## Critical and Appreciative Passages 167

I do not insist upon Dante's conception ; if I began I could not cease : besides, you might think this a wild imagination of one poet's heart. So I will rather read to you a few verses of the deliberate writing of a Knight of Pisa to his living lady, wholly characteristic of the feeling of all the noblest men of the thirteenth century, preserved among many other such records of knightly honour and love, which Dante Rossetti has gathered for us from among the early Italian poets.

" For lo ! thy law is passed  
That this my love should manifestly be  
To serve to honour thee  
And so I do ; and my delight is full,  
Accepted for the servant of thy rule

" Without almost, I am all rapturous,  
Since thus my will was set  
To serve, thou flower of joy, thine excellence .  
Nor ever seems it anything could rouse  
A pain or a regret,  
But on thee dwells mine every thought and sense :  
Considering that from thee all virtues spread  
As from a fountain head,—  
*That in thy gift is wisdom's best avail,*  
*And honour without fail ,*  
With whom each sovereign good dwells separate,  
Fulfilling the perfection of thy state.

" Lady, since I conceived  
Thy pleasurable aspect in my heart,  
*My life has been apart*  
*In shining brightness and the place of truth ;*  
Which, till that time, good sooth,  
Groped among shadows in a darken'd place,  
Where many hours and days  
It hardly ever had remember'd good.  
But now my servitude  
Is thine, and I am full of joy and rest.  
A man from a wild beast  
Thou madest me, since for thy love I lived."

You may think, perhaps, a Greek Knight would have had a lower estimate of women than this Christian lover. His own spiritual subjection to them was indeed not so absolute — but as regards their own personal character, it was only because you could not have followed me so easily — that I did not take the Greek women instead of Shakespeare's — and instance, for chief ideal types of human beauty and faith, the simple mother's and wife's heart of Andromache, the divine, yet rejected wisdom of Cassandra, the playful kindness and simple princess life of happy Nausicaa; the housewifely calm of that of Penelope, with its watch upon the sea — the ever patient fearless, hopelessly devoted piety of the sister and daughter, in Antigone — the bowing down of Iphigenia, lamb-like and silent, and finally the expectation of the resurrection made clear to the soul of the Greeks in the return from her grave of that Alcestis who to save her husband had passed calmly through the bitterness of death.

Now I could multiply witness upon witness of this kind upon you if I had time. I would take Chaucer, and show you why he wrote a legend of Good Women, but no legend of Good Men. I would take Spenser, and show you how all his fairy knights are sometimes deceived and sometimes vanquished — but the soul of Una is never darkened — and the spear of Britomart is never broken. Nay, I could go back into the mythical teaching of the most ancient times — and show you how the great people — by one of whose princesses it was appointed that the Lawgiver of all the earth should be educated — rather than by his own kindred, how that great Egyptian people, wisest then of nations gave to their Spirit of Wisdom the form of a woman, and into her hand, for a symbol — the weaver's shuttle — and how the name and form of that spirit, adopted believed and obeyed by the Greeks — became that Athena of the olive helm, and cloudy shield, to whose

faith you owe, down to this date, whatever you hold most precious in art, in literature, or in types of national virtue.\*

But I will not wander into this distant and mythical element ; I will only ask you to give its legitimate value to the testimony of these great poets and men of the world—consistent as you see it on this head. I will ask you whether it can be supposed that these men, in the main work of their lives, are amusing themselves with a fictitious and idle view of the relations between man and woman ;—nay, worse than fictitious or idle ; for a thing may be imaginary, yet desirable, if it were possible ; but this, their ideal of women, is, according to our common idea of marriage relation, wholly undesirable. The woman, we say, is not to guide, nor even to think, for herself. The man is always to be the wiser ; he is to be the thinker, the ruler, the superior in knowledge and discretion, as in power. Is it not somewhat important to make up our minds on this matter ? Are all these great men mistaken, or are we ? Are Shakespeare and Æschylus, Dante and Homer, merely dressing dolls for us ; or, worse than dolls, unnatural visions, the realization of which, were it possible, would bring anarchy into all households and ruin into all affections ? Nay, if you could suppose this, take lastly the evidence of facts, given by the human heart itself. In all Christian ages which have been remarkable for their purity or progress there has been absolute yielding of obedient devotion, by the lover, to his mistress. I say *obedient*—not merely enthusiastic and worshipping in imagination, but entirely subject, receiving from the beloved woman, however young, not only the encouragement, the praise, and the reward of all toil, but, so far as any choice is open, or any question difficult of decision, the *direction* of all toil. That chivalry, to the abuse and

\* For fuller discussion, see *Queen of the Air and Ethics of the Dust*.

d <honour & of which are attributable primarily what ever is cruel in war unjust in peace or corrupt and ignoble in domestic relations and to the original purity and power of which we owe the defence alike of faith of law and of love—that chivalry I say in its very first conception of honourable life assumes the subjection of the young knight to the command—should it ever be the command in caprice—of his lady. It assumes this because its masters knew that the first and necessary impulse of every truly taught and knightly heart is that of blind service to its lady—that where that true faith and captivity are not all wayward and wicked passion must be—and that in this rapturous obedience the single love of his youth is the sanctification of all man's strength and the continuance of all his purposes. And thus not because such obedience would be safe or honourable were it ever rendered to the unworthy—but because it ought to be impossible for every noble youth—it is impossible for every one rightly trained—to love any one whose gentle counsel he cannot trust or whose prayerful command he can hesitate to obey.

*Sesame and Lilies* Lecture II  
Of Queens Gardens ?

## Greek Myths

A myth in its simplest definition is a story with a meaning attached other than it seems to have at first—and the fact that it has such a meaning is generally marked by some of its circumstances being extraordinary or in the common use of the word unnatural. Thus if I tell you that Hercules killed a water-serpent in the lake of Lerna and if I mean and you understand nothing more than that fact the story whether true or false is not a myth. But if by

telling you this, I mean that Hercules purified the stagnation of many streams from deadly miasmata, my story, however simple, is a true myth ; only, as, if I left it in that simplicity, you would probably look for nothing beyond, it will be wise in me to surprise your attention by adding some singular circumstance ; for instance, that the water-snake had several heads, which revived as fast as they were killed, and which poisoned even the foot that trode upon them as they slept. And in proportion to the fullness of intended meaning I shall probably multiply and refine upon these improbabilities ; as, suppose, if, instead of desiring only to tell you that Hercules purified a marsh, I wished you to understand that he contended with the venom and vapour of envy and evil ambition, whether in other men's souls or in his own, and choked *that* malaria only by supreme toil—I might tell you that this serpent was formed by the Goddess whose pride was in the trial of Hercules ; and that its place of abode was by a palm tree ; and that for every head of it that was cut off, two rose up with renewed life ; and that the hero found at last he could not kill the creature at all by cutting its heads off or by crushing them ; but only by burning them down ; and that the midmost of them could not be killed even that way, but had to be buried alive. Only, in proportion as I mean more I shall certainly appear more absurd in my statement, and at last, when I get unendurably significant, all practical persons will agree that I was talking mere nonsense from the beginning, and never meant anything at all.

It is just possible, however, also, that the storyteller may all along have meant nothing but what he said, and that, incredible as the events may appear, he himself literally believed—and expected you also to believe—all this about Hercules, without any latent moral or history whatever. And it is very necessary, in reading traditions of this kind, to determine, first



of all whether you are listening to a simple person who is relating what at all events he believes to be true (and may therefore possibly have been so to some extent) or to a reserved philosopher who is veiling a theory of the universe under the grotesque of a fairy tale. It is in general more likely that the first supposition should be the right one — simple and credulous persons are perhaps fortunately more common than philosophers — and it is of the highest importance that you should take their innocent testimony as it was meant and not efface under the graceful explanation which your cultivated ingenuity may suggest either the evidence their story may contain (such as it is worth) of an extraordinary event having really taken place or the unquestionable light which it will cast upon the character of the person by whom it was frankly believed. And to deal with Greek religion honestly you must at once understand that this literal belief was in the mind of the general people as deeply rooted as ours in the legends of our own sacred book — and that a basis of unmiraculous event was as little suspected and an explanatory symbolism as rarely traced by them as by us. This story of Hercules and the Hydra then was to the general Greek mind in its best days a tale about a real hero and a real monster. Not one in a thousand knew anything of the way in which the story had arisen any more than the English peasant generally is aware of the plebeian origin of St. George \* or supposes that there were once alive in the world with sharp teeth and claws real and very ugly flying dragons. On the other hand few persons traced any moral or symbolical meaning in the story and the average Greek was as far from imagining any interpretation like that I have just given you as an average Englishman is

\* But in *For's Classics* Letter 26 Ruskin distinguishes the story of the plebeian George from that of the Saint who was born of noble parents.

from seeing in St. George the Red Cross Knight of Spenser, or in the dragon the Spirit of Infidelity. But, for all that, there was a certain undercurrent of consciousness in all minds, that the figures meant more than they at first showed; and according to each man's own faculties of sentiment, he judged and read them; just as a Knight of the Garter reads more in the jewel on his collar than the George and Dragon of a public-house expresses to the host or to his customers. Thus, to the mean person the myth always meant little; to the noble person, much.

(*Queen of the Air*, Lecture I.)

## Greek Gods

It seems to me that the Greek had exactly the same instinctive feeling about the elements that we have ourselves; that to Homer, as much as to Casimir de la Vigne,\* fire seemed ravenous and pitiless; to Homer, as much as to Keats—the sea-wave appeared wayward or idle, or whatever else it may be to the poetical passion. But then the Greek reasoned upon this sensation, saying to himself: "I can light the fire, and put it out; I can dry this water up, or drink it. It cannot be the fire or the water that rages, or that is wayward. But it must be something *in* this fire and *in* the water, which I cannot destroy by extinguishing the one, or evaporating the other, any more than I destroy myself by cutting off my finger; I was *in* my finger,—something of me at least was; I had a power over it and felt pain in it, though I am still as much myself when it is gone. So there may be a power in the water which is not water, but to which the water is as a body;—which can strike with it,

\* Casimir de la Vigne wrote a poem called "*La Toilette de Constance*," which relates how a young girl was burnt to death while arraying herself for a ball. See *Modern Painters*, Vol. III. chap. 12.

move in it suffer in it yet not be destroyed with it. This something this Great Water Spirit I must not confuse with the waves which are only its body. They may flow hither and thither increase or diminish. That must be indivisible—impenetrable—a god. So of fire also those rays which I can stop and in the midst of which I cast a shadow cannot be divine nor greater than I. They cannot feel but there may be something in them that feels—a glorious intelligence as much nobler and more swift than mine as these rays which are its body are nobler and swifter than my flesh—the spirit of all light and truth and melody and revolving hours.

It was easy to conceive farther that such spirits should be able to assume at will a human form in order to hold intercourse with men or to perform any act for which their proper body, whether of fire earth or air was unfitted. And it would have been to place them beneath instead of above humanity if assuming the form of man they could not also have tasted his pleasures. Hence the easy step to the more or less material *idols of deities* which are apt at first to shock us but which are indeed only dishonourable so far as they represent the god as false and unholy. It is not the materialism but the vice which degrades the conception for the materialism itself is never positive or complete. There is always some sense of exaltation in the spiritual and immortal body and of a power proceeding from the visible form through all the infinity of the element ruled by the particular god. The precise nature of the idea is well seen in the passage of the *Iliad* which describes the river Scamander defending the Trojans against Achilles. In order to remonstrate with the hero the god assumes a human form which nevertheless is in some way or other instantly recognized by Achilles as that of the river god. It is addressed at once as a river not as a man and its voice is the voice of a river out of

the deep whirlpools." Achilles refuses to obey its commands; and from the human form it returns instantly into its natural or divine one, and endeavours to overwhelm him with waves. Vulcan defends Achilles, and sends fire against the river, which suffers in its water-body, till it is able to bear no more. At last even the "nerve of the river," or "strength of the river" (note the expression), feels the fire, and this "strength of the river" addresses Vulcan in supplications for respite. There is in this precisely the idea of a vital part of the river-body, which acted and felt to which, if the fire reached, it was death, just as would be the case if it touched a vital part of the human body. Throughout the passage the manner of conception is perfectly clear and consistent; and if, in other places, the exact connection between the ruling spirit and the thing ruled is not so manifest, it is only because it is impossible for the human mind to dwell long upon such subjects without falling into inconsistencies, and gradually slackening its effort to grasp the entire truth; until the more spiritual part of it slips from its hold, and only the human form of the god is left, to be conceived and described as subject to all the errors of humanity. But I do not believe that the idea ever weakens itself down to mere allegory. When Pallas is said to attack and strike down Mars, it does not mean merely that Wisdom at that moment prevailed against Wrath. It means that there are, indeed, two great spirits, one entrusted to guide the human soul to wisdom and chastity, the other to kindle wrath and prompt to battle. It means that these two spirits, on the spot where, and at the moment when, a great contest was to be decided between all that they each governed in man, then and there assumed human form, and human weapons, and did verily and materially strike each other, until the Spirit of Wrath was crushed. And when Diana is said to hunt with her nymphs in the woods, *it does not mean*

*merely as Wordsworth puts it, that the poet or shepherd saw the moon and stars glancing between the branches of the trees and wished to say so figuratively.* It means that there is a living spirit to which the light of the moon is a body which takes delight in glancing between the clouds and following the wild beasts as they wander through the night and that this spirit sometimes assumes a perfect human form, and in this form, with real arrows pursues and slays the wild beasts which with its mere arrows of moonlight it could not slay retaining nevertheless, all the while, its power and being in the moonlight, and in all else that it rules

There is *not the smallest inconsistency or unspirituality in this conception.* If there were it would attach equally to the appearance of the angels to Jacob, Abraham Joshua or Manoah. In all those instances the highest authority which governs our own faith requires us to conceive divine power clothed with a human form (a form so real that it is recognized for superhuman only by its doing wondrously), and retaining nevertheless sovereignty and omnipresence in all the world. *This is precisely, as I understand it, the heathen idea of a God*

(*Modern Painters* Vol III chap 13)

Every heathen conception of deity in which you are likely to be interested has three distinct characters

I It has a physical character. It represents some of the great powers or objects of nature—sun or moon, or heaven or the winds or the sea. And the fables first related about each deity represent, figuratively, the action of the natural power which it represents, such as the rising and setting of the sun, the tides of the sea and so on

II It has an ethical character, and represents, in its history, the moral dealings of God with man. Thus Apollo is first, physically, the sun contending

with darkness ; but morally, the power of divine life contending with corruption. Athena is, physically, the air ; morally, the breathing of the divine spirit of wisdom. Neptune is, physically, the sea ; morally, the supreme power of agitating passion ; and so on.

III. It has, at last, a personal character ; and is realized in the minds of its worshippers as a living spirit, with whom men may speak face to face, as man speaks to his friend.

Now it is impossible to define exactly how far, at any period of a national religion, these three ideas are mingled ; or how far one prevails over the other. Each inquirer usually takes up one of these ideas, and pursues it, to the exclusion of the others ; no impartial efforts seem to have been made to discern the real state of the heathen imagination in its successive phases. For the question is not at all what a mythological figure meant in its origin ; but what it became in each subsequent mental development of the nation inheriting the thought. Exactly in proportion to the mental and the moral insight of any race, its mythological figures mean more to it, and become more real. An early and savage race means nothing more (because it has nothing more to mean), by its Apollo, than the sun ; while a cultivated Greek means every operation of divine intellect and justice.

I assure you, strange as it may seem, our scorn of Greek tradition depends, not on our belief, but our disbelief, of our own traditions. We have, as yet, no sufficient clue to the meaning of either ; but you will always find that, in proportion to the earnestness of our own faith, its tendency to accept a spiritual personality increases : and that the most vital and beautiful Christian temper rests joyfully in its conviction of the multitudinous ministry of living angels, infinitely varied in rank and power. You all know one expression of the purest and happiest form of such

futh as it exists in modern times in Richter's lovely illustrations of the Lord's Prayer. The real and living death angel girl is a pilgrim for journey, and softly crowned with flowers beckons at the dying mother's door. Child angels sit talking face to face with mortal children among the flowers — hold them by their little coats lest they fall on the stars — whisper dreams of heaven to them leaning over their pillows. Carry the sound of the church bells for them far through the air and even descending lower in service fill little cups with honey to hold out to the weary bee. By the way Lily did you tell the other children that story about your little sister, and Alice and the sea?

*Lily* I told it to Alice and to Miss Dora. I don't think I did to anybody else. I thought it wasn't worth

*Lecturer* We shall think it worth a great deal now. Lily if you will tell it us. How old is Dotty again? I forget.

*Lily* She is not quite three but she has such odd little old ways sometimes.

*Lecturer* And she is very fond of Alice?

*Lily* Yes. Alice was so good to her always!

*Lecturer* And so when Alice went away?

*Lily* Oh it was nothing you know to tell about only it was strange at the time.

*Lecturer* Well but I want you to tell it.

*Lily* The morning after Alice had gone Dotty was very sad and restless when she got up and went about looking into all the corners as if she could find Alice in them and at last she came to me and said 'Is Alice gone over the great sea?' And I said 'Yes she is gone over the great deep sea but she will come back again some day.' Then Dotty looked round the room and I had just poured some water out into the basin and Dotty ran to it and got up on a chair and dashed her hands through the water again and

again; and cried, "Oh, deep, deep sea! send little Alie back to me."

*Lecturer.* Isn't that pretty, children? There's a dear little heathen for you! The whole heart of Greek mythology is in that; the idea of a personal being in the elemental power;—of its being moved by prayer; and of its presence everywhere, making the broken diffusion of the element sacred

(*Ethics of the Dust, Lecture X*)

## The Virtues of Language

All the virtues of language are, in their roots moral; it becomes accurate if the speaker desires to be true; clear, if he speaks with sympathy and a desire to be intelligible; powerful, if he has earnestness, pleasant, if he has sense of rhythm and order. There are no other virtues of language producible by art than these: but let me mark more deeply for an instant the significance of one of them. Language, I said, is only clear when it is sympathetic. You can, in truth, understand a man's word only by understanding his temper. Your own word is also as of an unknown tongue to him unless he understands yours. And it is this which makes the art of language, if any one is to be chosen separately from the rest, that which is fittest for the instrument of a gentleman's education. To teach the meaning of a word thoroughly, is to teach the nature of the spirit that coined it; the secret of language is the secret of sympathy, and its full charm is possible only to the gentle. And thus the principles of beautiful speech have all been fixed by sincere and kindly speech. On the laws which have been determined by sincerity, false speech, apparently beautiful, may afterwards be constructed; but all such utterance, whether in oration or poetry, is not only without



permanent power, but it is destructive of the principles it has usurped. And this truth would have been long ago manifest had it not been that in periods of advanced academical science there is always a tendency to deny the sincerity of the first masters of language. Once learn to write gracefully in the manner of an ancient author and we are apt to think that he also wrote in the manner of some one else. But no noble or right style was ever yet founded but out of a sincere heart.

No man is worth reading to form your style, who does not mean what he says nor was any great style ever invented but by some man who meant what he said. Find out the beginner of a great manner of writing and you have also found the declarer of some true facts or sincere passions and your whole method of reading will thus be quickened, for, being sure that your author really meant what he said, you will be much more careful to ascertain what it is that he means.

And of yet greater importance is it deeply to know that every beauty possessed by the language of a nation is significant of the innermost laws of its being. Keep the temper of the people stern and manly, make their associations grave courteous, and for worthy objects occupy them in just deeds, and their tongue must needs be a grand one. Nor is it possible therefore—observe the necessary reflected action—that any tongue should be a noble one, of which the words are not so many trumpet calls to action. All great languages invariably utter great things, and command them, they cannot be mimicked but by obedience, the breath of them is inspiration because it is not only vocal, but vital, and you can only learn to speak as these men spoke, by becoming what these men were.

## What is Style in Language ?

... Do you, good reader, *know* good " style " when you get it? Can you say of half-a-dozen given lines taken anywhere out of a novel or poem, or play, That is good, essentially, in style, or bad, essentially? And can you say why such half-a-dozen lines are good, or bad?

I imagine that, in most cases, the reply would be given with hesitation; yet if you will give me a little patience, and take some accurate pains, I can show you the main tests of style in the space of a couple of pages.

I take two examples of absolutely perfect, and in manner highest, *i.e.* kingly, and heroic, style: the first example in expression of anger, the second of love.

- (1) " We are glad the Dauphin is so pleasant with us ;  
His present, and your pains, we thank you for.  
When we have match'd our rackets to these balls,  
We will, in France, by God's grace, play a set  
Shall strike his father's crown into the hazard." \*
- (2) " My gracious Silence, hail !  
Would'st thou have laughed, had I come coffin'd  
home  
That weep'st to see me triumph ? Ah, my dear,  
Such eyes the widows in Corioli wear  
And mothers that lack sons." †

Let us note, point by point, the conditions of greatness common to both these passages, so opposite in temper.

(a) Absolute command over all passion, however intense; this the first-of-first conditions (see the

\* *King Henry V.*, Act I. Sc. ii.  
† *Coriolanus*, Act II. Sc. i.

king's own sentence just before ' We are no tyrant, but a Christian king Urto *whose grace* our passion is as subject As are our wretches fettered in our prisons ) and with this self-command the supremely surveying grasp of every thought that is to be uttered before its utterance so that each may come in its exact place time and connection The slightest hurry the misplacing of a word or the unnecessary accent on a syllable would destroy the style in an instant

(b) Choice of the fewest and simplest words \* that can be found in the compass of the language to express the thing meant these few words being also arranged in the most straightforward and intelligible way allowing inversion only when the subject can be made primary without obscurity thus ' his present and your pains we thank you for ' is better than ' we thank you for his present and your pains ' because the Dauphin's gift is by courtesy put before the Ambassador's pains but ' when to these balls our rackets we have matched ' would have spoiled the style in a moment because—I was going to have said ball and racket are of equal rank and therefore only the natural order proper but also here the natural order is the desired one the English racket to have precedence of the French ball In the fourth line in France comes first as announcing the most important resolution of action the *by God's grace* next as the only condition rendering resolution possible the detail of issue follows with the strictest limit in the final word The king does not say danger far less dishonour, but hazard only of *that* he is humanly speaking sure

(c) Perfectly emphatic and clear utterance of the chosen words slowly in the degree of their import

\* Compare with letter on page 83

ance, with omission however of every word not absolutely required; and natural use of the familiar contractions of final dissyllable. Thus "play a set shall strike" is better than "play a set *that* shall strike" and "match'd" is kingly short—no necessity of metre could have excused "matched" instead. On the contrary, the three first words, "We are glad," would have been spoken by the King more slowly and fully than any other syllables in the whole passage, first pronouncing the kingly "we" at its proudest, and then the "are" as a continuous state, and then the "glad," as the exact contrary of what the ambassadors expected him to be.

(d) Absolute spontaneity in doing all this, easily and necessarily as the heart beats. The King *cannot* speak otherwise than he does—nor the hero. The words not merely come to them, but are compelled to them. Even lisping numbers "come," but mighty numbers are ordained, and inspired.

(e) Melody in the words, changeable with their passion, fitted to it exactly, and the utmost of which the language is capable—the melody in prose being Eolian and variable—in verse, nobler by submitting itself to stricter law. I will enlarge upon this point presently.

(f) Utmost spiritual contents in the words; so that each carries not only its instant meaning, but a cloudy companionship of higher or darker meaning according to the passion—nearly always indicated by metaphor: "play a set"—sometimes by abstraction (thus in the second passage "silence" for silent one)—sometimes by description instead of direct epithet ("confined" for dead), but always indicative of there being more in the speaker's mind than he has said, or than he can say, full though his saying be. On the quantity of this attendant fullness depends the majesty of style; that is to say, virtually, on the quantity of contained thought in briefest words, such thought

being primarily loving and true and thus the sum of all—that nothing can be well said but with truth not beautifully but by love

(*Fiction Fair and Foul* III)

## On his own Style of Writing

Now the intense fault of all my early writing is that you know in a moment it is my writing it has always the taste of me in it But that is the weakness of me or the insincerity As I advance in life and get more steady and more true you don't see the manner so distinctly but you will see the matter far more

Now I will read you two very short but quite characteristic passages \* fifteen years apart for the one of which at the time I was much applauded the second nobody that I ever heard of yet cares about

He who has once stood beside the grave to look upon the companionship which has been for ever closed feeling how impotent *there* are the wild love and the keen sorrow to give one instant's pleasure to the pulseless heart or atone in the lowest measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart which can only be discharged to the dust

Now that is a true saying and in the measure of me at that day a sincere one But with my present knowledge of literature I could tell in an instant that the person who wrote that *never had so stood beside the dead* I could be perfectly sure of it for two reasons—the first that there was in the passage feeling and the melody that comes of feeling enough to show that the writer was capable of deep passion and the second that being so capable if he had ever stood be

\* The first passage is from *Modern Painters* Vol. I the second from *Unto the Last*

side his dead before it was buried out of his sight, he would never, in speaking of the time, have studied how to put three d's one after another in debt, discharged, and dust.

Next, I will read you the passage no one has cared about, but which one day many will assuredly come to read with care, the last paragraph, namely, of that central book of my life :

" And if, on due and honest thought over these things, it seems that the kind of existence to which men are now summoned by every plea of pity and claim of right, may, for some time at least, not be a luxurious one ;—consider whether, even supposing it guiltless, luxury would be desired by any of us, if we saw clearly at our side the suffering which accompanies it in the world. Luxury is indeed possible in the future—innocent and exquisite ; luxury for all, and by the help of all ; but luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant ; the cruellest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold. Raise the veil boldly : face the light ; and if, as yet, the light of the eye can only be through tears, and the light of the body through sackcloth, go thou forth weeping, bearing precious seed, until the time come, and the kingdom, and Christ's gift of bread, and bequest of peace, shall be ' Unto this last as unto thee ' ; and when, for earth's severed multitudes of the wicked and the weary, there shall be holier reconciliation than that of the narrow home, and calm economy, where the Wicked cease—not from trouble, but from troubling—and the Weary are at rest."

Now, first, that passage is better than the other because there's not any art of an impudently visible kind, and not a word which, as far as I know, you could put another for, without loss to the sense. It is true that *plea* and *pity* both begin with *p*, but *plea* is the right word, and there is no other which is in full and clear opposition to *claim*.

But there is still affectation in the passage—the affectation of conciseness. Were I writing it now I should throw it looser and explain here and there getting intelligibility at the cost of concentration. Thus when I say—

Luxury is possible in the future—innocent and exquisite—luxury for all and by the help of all—

that is a remains of my old bad trick of putting my words in braces like game neck to neck and leaving the reader to untie them. Hear how I should put the same sentence now

Luxury is indeed possible in the future—innocent because granted to the need of all and exquisite because perfected by the aid of all

You see it has gained a little in melody in being put right and gained a great deal in clearness

Then another and worse flaw in this passage is that there is a moment's incontinence in it—loss of self command and with that of truth. The cruellest man living could not sit at his feast unless he sat blindfold. That is not true. There are persons cruel enough to eat their dinners whatever they see but not many

But putting by these remains of the errors of my old manner this writing of my central life is in all serious ways as good as I can do and it contained at once the substance of all that I have had since to say. And it is good chiefly in this that being most earnest in itself it will teach you to recognize with greater clearness the truth of noble words

(From *Readings in Modern Painters* Lecture 3)

PAINTING, SCULPTURE, AND ARCHITECTURE

Unity in Art—Claude's "Il Mulino," with a description of the Campagna

Impressiveness is destroyed by a multitude of contradictory facts, and the accumulation which is not harmonious is discordant. He who endeavours to unite simplicity with magnificence, to guide from solitude to festivity, and to contrast melancholy with mirth, must end by the production of confused inanity. There is a peculiar spirit possessed by every kind of scene; and although a point of contrast may sometimes enhance and exhibit this particular feeling more intensely, it must be only a point, not an equalized opposition. Every introduction of new and different feeling weakens the force of what has already been impressed, and the mingling of all emotions must conclude in apathy, as the mingling of all colours in white.

Let us test by these simple rules one of the "ideal" landscape compositions of Claude, that known to the Italians as "Il Mulino." \*

The foreground is a piece of very lovely and perfect forest scenery, with a dance of peasants by a brook-side; quite enough subject to form, in the hands of a master, an impressive and complete picture. On the other side of the brook, however, we have a piece of pastoral life; a man with some bulls and goats tumbling headforemost into the water, owing to some sudden paralytic affection of all their legs. Even this group is one too many; the shepherd had no business

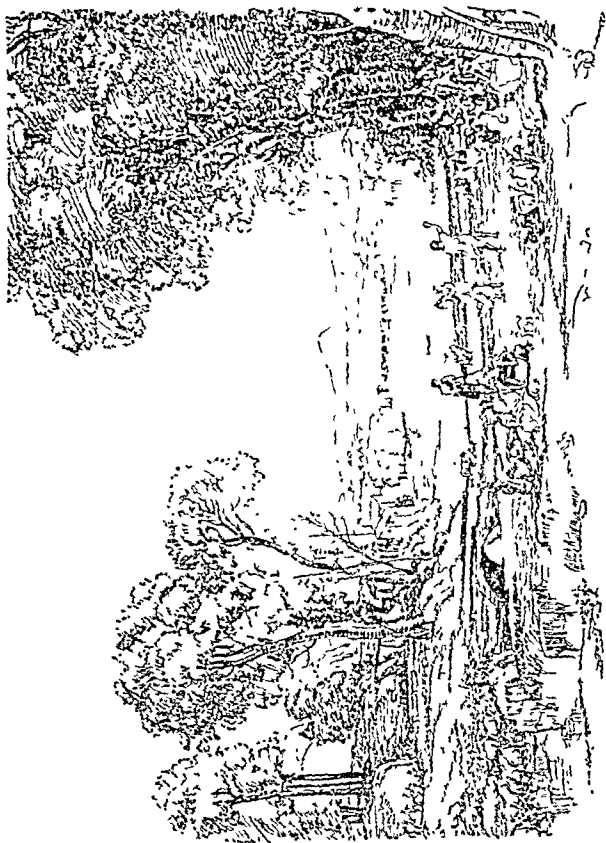
\* There is a version of this picture in the National Gallery, where it is called "The Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca."



to drive his flock so near the dancers and the dancers will certainly frighten the cattle. But when we look farther into the picture our feelings receive a sudden shock by the unexpected appearance among things pastoral and musical of the military, a number of Roman soldiers riding in on hobby horses with a leader on foot apparently encouraging them to make an immediate and decisive charge on the musicians. Beyond the soldiers is a circular temple in exceedingly bad repair and close beside it built against its very walls a neat water mill in full work. By the mill flows a large river with a weir all across it. The weir has not been made for the mill (for that receives its water from the hills by a trough carried over the temple) but it is particularly ugly and monotonous in its line of fall and the water below forms a dead looking pond on which some people are fishing in punts. The banks of this river resemble in contour the later geological formations around London constituted chiefly of broken pots and oyster-shells. At an inconvenient distance from the water-side stands a city composed of twenty five round towers and a pyramid. Beyond the city is a handsome bridge, beyond the bridge part of the Campagna with fragments of aqueducts, beyond the Campagna the chain of the Alps on the left the cascades of Tivoli.

This is I believe a fair example of what is commonly called an ideal landscape a group of the artist's studies from Nature individually spoiled selected with such opposition of characters as may insure their neutralizing each other's effect and united with sufficient unnaturalness and violence of association to insure their producing a general sensation of the impossible. Let us analyse the separate subjects a little in this ideal work of Claude's.

Perhaps there is no more impressive scene on earth than the solitary extent of the Campagna of Rome



IL MULINO. (CLAUDE LORRAINE.)

*(From a pen-and-ink sketch by E. Heber Thompson, designed to show the general composition of the painting.)*

under evening light. Let the reader imagine himself for a moment withdrawn from the sounds and motion of the living world and sent forth alone into this wild and wasted plain. The earth yields and crumbles beneath his foot: tread he never so lightly, for its substance is white, hollow, and carious like the dusty wreck of the bones of men\*. The long knotted grass waves and tosses feebly in the evening wind, and the shadows of its motion shake feverishly along the banks of ruin that lift themselves to the sunlight. Hillocks of mouldering earth heave around him as if the dead beneath were struggling in their sleep: scattered blocks of black stone, four square remnants of mighty edifices, not one left upon another, lie upon them to keep them down. A dull purple poisonous haze stretches level along the desert, veiling its spectral wrecks of massy ruins, on whose rents the red light rests like a dying fire on defiled altars. The blue ridge of the Alban Mount lifts itself against a solemn space of green, clear, quiet sky. Watch-towers of dark clouds stand steadfastly along the promontories of the Apennines. From the plain to the mountains the shattered aqueducts, pier beyond pier, melt into the darkness like shadowy and countless troops of funeral mourners passing from a nation's grave.

Let us with Claude make a few ideal alterations in this landscape. First we will reduce the multitudinous precipices of the Apennines to four sugar loaves. Secondly, we will remove the Alban Mount and put a large dust heap in its stead. Next we will knock down the greater part of the aqueducts and leave only an arch or two, that their infinity of length may no longer be painful from its monotony. For the purple mist and declining sun we will substitute a

\* The vegetable soil of the Campagna is chiefly formed by decomposed lavas, and under it lies a bed of white pumice, exactly resembling remnants of bones. (Note added by Ruskin.)

## Critical and Appreciative Passages 191

bright blue sky, with round white clouds. Finally, we will get rid of the unpleasant ruins in the foreground; we will plant some handsome trees therein, we will send for some fiddlers, and get up a dance, and a picnic party.

It will be found, throughout the picture, that the same species of improvement is made on the materials which Claude had ready to his hand. The descending slopes of the city of Rome, towards the pyramid of Caius Cestius, supply not only lines of the most exquisite variety and beauty, but matter for contemplation and reflection in every fragment of their buildings. This passage has been idealized by Claude into a set of similar round towers, respecting which no idea can be formed but that they are uninhabitable, and to which no interest can be attached, beyond the difficulty of conjecturing what they could have been built for. The ruins of the temple are rendered unimpressive by the juxtaposition of the water-mill, and inexplicable by the introduction of the Roman soldiers. The glide of the muddy streams of the melancholy Tiber and Anio through the Campagna is impressive in itself, but altogether ceases to be so, when we disturb their stillness of motion by a weir, adorn their neglected flow with a handsome bridge, and cover their solitary surface with punts, nets, and fishermen.

It cannot, I think, be expected, that landscapes like this should have any effect on the human heart, except to harden or to degrade it; to lead it from the love of what is simple, earnest, and pure, to what is as sophisticated and corrupt in arrangement as erring and imperfect in detail.

*(Modern Painters, Vol. I., Preface to the  
Second Edition.)*

## Truth in Art—Raphael's Cartoon of the *Charge to St Peter*

I suppose there is no event in the whole life of Christ to which in hours of doubt or fear men turn with more anxious thirst to know the close facts of it or with more earnest and passionate dwelling upon every syllable of its recorded narrative than Christ's showing Himself to His disciples at the lake of Galilee. There is something pre-eminently open, natural, full, fronting our disbelief in this manifestation. The others recorded after the resurrection were sudden, phantom-like, occurring to men in profound sorrow and wearied agitation of heart, not it might seem safe judges of what they saw. But the agitation was now over. They had gone back to their daily work, thinking still their business lay net-wards, unmeshed from the literal rope and drag. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. True words enough, and having far echo beyond those Galilean hills. That night they caught nothing, but when the morning came in the clear light of it, behold a figure stood on the shore. They were not thinking of anything but their fruitless hauls. They had no guess who it was. It asked them simply if they had caught anything. And John shades his eyes from the morning sun with his hand to look who it is, and though the glinting of the sea too dazzles him, he makes out who it is at last, and poor Simon, not to be outrun this time, tightens his fisher's coat about him, and dashes in over the nets. One would have liked to see him swim those hundred yards, and stagger to his knees on the beach.

Well, the others get to the beach too in time, in such slow way as men in general do get in this world.

to its true shore, much impeded by that wonderful "dragging the net with fishes"; but they get there—seven of them in all;—first the Denier, and then the slowest believer, and then the quickest believer, and then the two throne-seekers, and two more, we know not who.

They sit down on the shore face to face with Him, and eat their broiled fish as He bids. And then, to Peter, all dripping still, shivering and amazed, staring at Christ in the sun, on the other side of the coal fire,—thinking a little, perhaps, of what happened by another coal fire, when it was colder, and having had no word once changed with him by his Master since that look of His,—to him, so amazed, comes the question, "Simon, lovest thou Me?" Try to feel that a little, and think of it till it is true to you; and then, take up that infinite monstrosity and hypocrisy—Raphael's Cartoon of the Charge to Peter. . . . Note the handsomely curled hair and neatly tied sandals of the men who had been out all night in the sea-mists and on the slimy decks. Note their convenient dresses for going a-fishing, with trains that lie a yard along the ground, and goodly fringes,—all made to match, an apostolic fishing costume.\* Note how Peter especially (whose chief glory was in his wet coat *girt* about him, and naked limbs) is enveloped in folds and fringes, so as to kneel and hold his keys with grace. No fire of coals at all, nor lonely mountain shore, but a pleasant Italian landscape, full of villas and churches, and a flock of sheep to be pointed at; and the whole group of Apostles, not round Christ, as they would have been naturally, but straggling away in a line, that they may all be shown.

The simple truth is, that the moment we look at the picture we feel our belief of the whole thing taken

\* I suppose Raphael intended a reference to Num. xv. 38; but if he did, the *blue* riband, or "*vitta*," as it is in the Vulgate, should have been on the borders too. (Note added by Ruskin.)

away. There is visibly no possibility of that group ever having existed in any place or on any occasion. It is all a mere mythic absurdity and faded concoction of fringes, muscular arms and curly heads of Greek philosophers.

(*Modern Painters* Vol III chap 4)

## An Example of Sincere Sacred Art— A Picture by Paul Veronese

There is one distinction of the very highest import between the treatment of sacred subjects by Venetian painters and by all others.

Throughout the rest of Italy piety had become abstract and opposed theoretically to worldly life; hence the Florentine and Umbrian painters generally separated their Saints from living men. They delighted in imaginary scenes of spiritual perfectness — Paradieses and companies of the redeemed at the judgment — glorified meetings of martyrs — madonnas surrounded by circles of angels. If which was rare definite portraiture of living men were introduced these real characters formed a kind of chorus or attendant company taking no part in the action. At Venice all this was reversed and so boldly as at first to shock with its seeming irreverence a spectator accustomed to the formalities and abstractions of the so-called sacred schools. The madonnas are no more seated apart on their thrones the saints no more breathe celestial air. They are on our own plain ground—nay here in our houses with us. All kind of worldly business going on in their presence fearlessly our own friends and respected acquaintances with all their mortal faults and in their mortal flesh looking at them face to face unalarmed nay our dearest children playing with their pet dogs at Christ's very feet.



A FAMILY GROUP. (Part of a picture by PAUL VFRONESF)  
(From a pen and ink sketch by E. Heber Thompson, after Ruskin's own sketch.)



I once myself thought this irreverent. How foolishly! As if children whom He loved *could* play anywhere else.

The picture most illustrative of this feeling is perhaps that at Dresden of Veronese's family painted by himself.

He wishes to represent them as happy and honoured. The best happiness and highest honour he can imagine for them is that they should be presented to the Madonna to whom therefore they are being brought by the three virtues—Faith Hope and Charity.

The Virgin stands in a recess behind two marble shafts such as may be seen in any house belonging to an old family in Venice. She places the boy Christ on the edge of a balustrade before her. At her side are St John the Baptist and St Jerome. This group occupies the left side of the picture. The pillars seen sideways divide it from the group formed by the Virtues with the wife and children of Veronese. He himself stands a little behind his hands clasped in prayer.

His wife kneels full in front a strong Venetian woman well advanced in years. She has brought up her children in fear of God and is not afraid to meet the Virgin's eyes. She gazes steadfastly on them, her proud head and gentle self possessed face are relieved in one broad mass of shadow against a space of light formed by the white robes of Faith who stands beside her—guardian and companion. Perhaps a somewhat disappointing Faith at first sight for her face is not in any special way exalted or refined. Veronese knew that Faith had to companion simple and slow hearted people perhaps oftener than able or refined people—does not therefore insist upon her being severely intellectual or looking as if she were always in the best company. So she is only distinguished by her pure white (not bright white) dress her delicate hand her golden hair drifted in light

ripples across her breast, from which the white robes fall nearly in the shape of a shield—the shield of Faith. A little behind her stands Hope; she also, at first, not to most people a recognizable Hope. We usually paint Hope as young, and joyous. Veronese knows better. The young hope is vain hope—passing away in rain of tears; but the Hope of Veronese is aged, assured, remaining when all else has been taken away. “For tribulation worketh patience, to patience experience, and experience hope;” and *that* hope maketh not ashamed.

She has a black veil on her head.

Then again, in the front, is Charity, red-robed; stout in the arms,—a servant of all work, She; but small-headed, not being given specially to thinking; soft-eyed, her hair braided brightly; her lips rich red, sweet-blossoming. She has got some work to do even now, for a nephew of Veronese is doubtful about coming forward, and looks very humbly and penitently towards the Virgin—his life perhaps not having been quite so exemplary as might at present be wished. Faith reaches her small white hand lightly back to him, lays the tips of her fingers lightly on his; but Charity takes firm hold of him by the wrist from behind, and will push him on presently, if he still hangs back.

In front of the mother kneel her two eldest children, a girl of about sixteen, and a boy a year or two younger. They are both rapt in adoration,—the boy’s being the deepest. Nearer us, at their left side, is a younger boy, about nine years old—a black-eyed fellow, full of life—and evidently his father’s darling (for Veronese has put him full in light in the front; and given him a beautiful white silken jacket, barred with black, that nobody may ever miss seeing him to the end of time). He is a little shy about being presented to the Madonna, and for the present has got behind the pillar, blushing, but opening his black eyes wide; he is just summoning courage to peep round and see if she looks

kind. A still younger child about six years old is really frightened and has run back to his mother catching hold of her dress at the waist. She throws her right arm round him and over him with exquisite instinctive action not moving her eyes from the Madonna's face. Last of all the youngest child perhaps about three years old is neither frightened nor interested but finds the ceremony tedious and is trying to coax the dog to play with him but the dog which is one of the little curly short nosed fringed pawed things which all Venetian ladies petted will not now be coaxed. For the dog is the last link in the chain of lowering feeling and takes his doggi h views of the matter. He cannot understand first how the Madonna got into the house nor secondly why she is allowed to stay disturbing the family and taking all their attention from his dogship. And he is walking away much offended.

(*Modern Painters* Vol V Pt ix chap 3)

## “ Good Taste is a Moral Quality ”

All good architecture is the expression of national life and character and it is produced by a prevalent and eager national taste or desire for beauty. And I want you to think a little of the deep significance of this word taste for no statement of mine has been more earnestly or oftener controverted than that good taste is a moral quality. No say many of my antagonists taste is one thing morality is another. Tell us what is pretty we shall be glad to know that but we need no sermons—even were you able to preach them which may be doubted.

Permit me therefore to fortify this old doctrine of mine somewhat. Taste is not only a part and an index of morality—it is the *only* morality. The first,

and last, and closest trial question to any living creature is, "What do you like?" Tell me what you like, and I'll tell you what you are. Go out into the street and ask the first man or woman you meet, what their "taste" is; and if they answer candidly, you know them, body and soul. "You, my friend in the rags, with the unsteady gait, what do *you* like?" "A pipe, and a quartern of gin." I know you. "You, good woman with the quick step and tidy bonnet, what do you like?" "A swept hearth and a clean tea-table; and my husband opposite me, and a baby at my breast." Good, I know you also. "You, little girl, with the golden hair and the soft eyes, what do you like?" "My canary, and a run among the wood hyacinths." "You, little boy with the dirty hands, and the low forehead, what do you like?" "A shy at the sparrows, and a game at pitch farthing." Good, we know them all now. What more need we ask?

"Nay," perhaps you answer; "we need rather to ask what these children and people do, than what they like. If they *do* right, it is no matter that they like what is wrong; and if they *do* wrong, it is no matter that they like what is right. Doing is the great thing; and it does not matter that the man likes drinking, so that he does not drink; nor that the little girl likes to be kind to her canary, if she will not learn her lessons; nor that the little boy likes throwing stones at the sparrows, if he goes to the Sunday School." Indeed, for a short time, and in a provisional sense, this is true. For if, resolutely, people do what is right, in time to come they like doing it. But they only are in a right moral state when they *have* come to like doing it; and as long as they don't like it, they are still in a vicious state. The man is not in health of body who is always thinking of the bottle in the cupboard, though he bravely bears his thirst; but the man who heartily enjoys water in the morning, and

wine in the evening each in its proper quantity and time And the entire object of true education is to make people not merely *do* the right things but *enjoy* the right things—not merely industrious but to love industry—not merely learned but to love knowledge—not merely pure but to love purity—not merely just but to hunger and thirst after justice

(*Crown of Wild Olive* II)

## The Art of a Great Sculptor—Tomb of Ilaria di Caretto

Between the cold severity which cannot reach the tenderness of death and the vivid insolence which forgets its power is placed this perfect tomb—a sacred portraiture of an infinite peace—laid as it were between the living and the dead—Christ's word spoken in perpetual marble She is not dead—but sleepeth

And now let me ask you to note one by one the conditions in the mind of the sculptor and the modes in which he must use reserve or forbid his own imagination skill and pride to obtain such a result as this Above all things first he must subdue his pride or at least his love of applause He must derive no praise from the unfeeling Every decoration that can be parted with he refuses there is no fringe or embroidery here to be played with in presence of death All *terror* also he refuses there is no ghostliness of winding sheet no wasting of sickness on the features All *curiosity* he refuses there is no fine unpressing of the pillow by the head no subtle crumpling of the wrinkles of the dress about the limbs Nay all too attractive extreme of the fairest truth he refuses a lock of the hair escapes from its fillet and trembles loosely down upon the cheek with a perfect tenderness

and had Ghiberti or Luca della Robbia touched it, it would have been so soft, so finishedly like hair, that the eye might have been caught by it, and the meaner thought intended—how wonderful. Not so with Quercia. A few quiet resolute touches, ineffably subtle and unperceived in their skill, and the lock lies on the cheek indeed, but you do not look at it—only at the face.

Again, he is as much master of all the laws of balance and weight in the human body as Michael Angelo himself. But he does not want you to think of balances or weight. In Michael Angelo's Adonis, or David, or Twilight, or Bound Slave you instantly think how languid the Adonis, how balanced in youthful strength the David, how deep in dreams the Twilight, how bowed in toil the Slave; and had Michael Angelo cut this, you would have felt instantly how heavily she lies—how dead. Not so Quercia. He will not let you think of anything secondary for an instant—not of flesh, not of death, and least of all, of him or his knowledge. The young matron lies at rest, like a fallen flower. Her hands are crossed as they fall, not on her breast—that would have been too emotional for Quercia; only so. Any other sculptor would have made them daintily beautiful; not he. They are just natural, even not tapered to the finger-ends a bit, but bluntish, though small and soft; just a simple lady's hands, laid one on the other as easily as if she had but that moment put them so. You don't think of saying "What pretty hands," still less, "How exquisitely they are cut." But try to draw them, and you will find dimpled Nature herself not more imitable.

Again with all this reserve and restraint of power, all is done with such consummate point that, had he disposed the folds of the drapery entirely by natural laws, the statue would have been deceptive, and every fool would have gaped at it for its deception. Quercia

will not have it so I must not have the mob coming here he thinks to see how like marble can be to clothes he arranges the dress over the breast in perfectly natural but close-drawn folds and thus permits the soft outline of the form beneath but from the shoulder he draws these terminal folds straight to the feet They would be only possible if the statue was erect nor then in this continuousness no drapery unless under tension could take so unbroken lines whereas these are not even absolutely straight, but curves of extreme subtlety

How can I defend this? you will ask me I do not merely defend I assert it for the protecting excellence of the statue but I must ask you to let me defer defence of it till next lecture for to-day I only want to tell you all the points to be noted and have no time for this debate which runs into metaphysics

For the final point then Hitherto we have seen Quercia thinking only of his chief subject admitting no secondary motive for a moment. One at last he admits He has given humanity in all its perfectness, accepting the glory of death beside it he will put the lower creature in its obedience watching the mystery of death He has put Ilaria's dog at her feet which rest upon him A bull terrier he is as far as I know dogs rightly chosen whether by Ilaria herself or by Quercia for her as the most faithful He takes the place here of the old heraldic hound or other merely symbolic creature But this dog of Quercia's is living he lays his paws on the outer fold of his mistress's dress lies utterly quiet under her feet the hem of the dress just sweeping past his breast and down over one of his paws His head only is turned to watch the face Will she not wake then?

(*Schools of Art in Florence V*)

## Life in Sculpture : the Distinction between Hand-work and Machine-work

I said, early in this essay, that hand-work might always be known from machine-work ; observing, however, at the same time, that it was possible for men to turn themselves into machines, and to reduce their labour to the machine level ; but so long as men work *as men*, putting their heart into what they do, and doing their best, it matters not how bad workmen they may be, there will be that in the handling which is above all price : it will be plainly seen that some places have been delighted in more than others—that there have been a pause, and a care about them ; and then there will come careless bits, and fast bits ; and here the chisel will have struck hard, and there lightly, and anon timidly ; and if the man's mind as well as his heart went with his work, all this will be in the right places, and each part will set off the other ; and the effect of the whole, as compared with the same design cut by a machine or a lifeless hand, will be like that of poetry well read and deeply felt to that of the same verses jangled by rote. There are many to whom the difference is imperceptible ; but to those who love poetry it is everything—they had rather not hear it at all, than hear it ill read ; and to those who love Architecture, the life and accent of the hand are everything. They had rather not have ornament at all, than see it ill cut—deadly cut, that is. I cannot too often repeat, it is not coarse cutting, it is not blunt cutting, that is necessarily bad ; but it is *cold* cutting—the look of equal trouble everywhere—the smooth diffused tranquillity of heartless pains—the regularity of a plough in a level field. The chill is more likely, indeed, to show itself in finished work than in any other—men cool and tire as they complete : and if



completeness is thought to be vested in polish and to be attainable by help of sand paper we may as well give the work to the engine lathe at once. But *right finish* is simply the full rendering of the intended impression and *high finish* is the rendering of a well intended and vivid impression and it is oftener got by rough than fine handling. I am not sure whether it is frequently enough observed that sculpture is not the mere cutting of the *form* of anything in stone it is the cutting of the *effect* of it. Very often the true form in the marble would not be in the least like itself. The sculptor must paint with his chisel half his touches are not to realize but to put power into the form they are touches of light and shadow and raise a ridge or sink a hollow not to represent an actual ridge or hollow but to get a line of light or a spot of darkness. In a coarse way this kind of execution is very marked in old French woodwork the noses of the eyes of its chimeric monsters being cut boldly into holes which variously placed and always dark give all kinds of strange and startling expressions averted and askance to the fantastic countenances. Perhaps the highest examples of this kind of sculpture-painting are the works of Mino da Fiesole, their best effects being reached by strange angular and seemingly rude touches of the chisel. The lips of one of the children on the tombs in the church of the Badia appear only half finished when they are seen close yet the expression is farther carried and more ineffable than in any piece of marble I have ever seen especially considering its delicacy and the softness of the child features. In a sterner kind that of the statues in the sacristy of St Lorenzo equals it and there again by incompleteness. I know no example of work in which the forms are absolutely true and complete where such a result is attained.

(*Seven Lamps of Architecture* V The  
Lamp of Life )

## Sympathy and Humour in the Sculptor's Art

You all probably know the beautiful photographs which have been published within the last year or two of the porches of the Cathedral of Amiens. I hold one of these up to you (merely that you may know what I am talking about, as of course you cannot see the detail at this distance, but you will recognize the subject). Have you ever considered how much sympathy, and how much humour, are developed in filling this single doorway with these sculptures of the history of St. Honoré (and, by the way, considering how often we English are now driving up and down the rue St. Honoré, we may as well know as much of the saint as the old architect cared to tell us)? You know, in all legends of saints who ever were bishops, the first thing you are told of them is that they didn't want to be bishops. So here is St. Honoré, who doesn't want to be a bishop, sitting sulkily in the corner, he hugs his book with both hands, and won't get up to take his crosier; and here are all the city aldermen of Amiens come to *poke* him up; and all the monks in the town in a great puzzle what they shall do for a bishop if St. Honoré won't be; and here's one of the monks in the opposite corner who is quite cool about it, and thinks they'll get on well enough without St. Honoré,—you see that in his face perfectly. At last St. Honoré consents to be bishop, and here he sits in a throne, and has his book now grandly on a desk instead of his knees, and he directs one of the village curates how to find relics in a wood; here is the wood, and here is the village curate, and here are the tombs, with the bones of St. Victorien and Gentien in them.

After this, St. Honoré performs grand mass, and the miracle occurs of the appearance of a hand blessing the wafer, which occurrence afterwards was painted

for the arms of the abbey. Then St Honoré dies and here is his tomb with his statue on the top, and miracles are being performed at it—a deaf man having his ear touched and a blind man groping his way up to the tomb with his dog. Then here is a great procession in honour of the relics of St Honoré and under his coffin are some cripples being healed and the coffin itself is put above the bar which separates the cross from the lower subjects because the tradition is that the figure on the crucifix of the Church of St Lurmin bowed its head in token of acceptance as the relics of St Honoré passed beneath.

Now just consider the amount of sympathy with human nature and observance of it shown in this one bas-relief—the sympathy with disputing monks with puzzled aldermen with melancholy recluse with triumphant prelate with palsy stricken poverty with ecclesiastical magnificence or miracle working faith. Consider how much intellect was needed in the architect and how much observance of nature before he could give the expression to these various figures—cast these multitudinous draperies—design these rich and quaint fragments of tombs and altars—weave with perfect animation the entangled branches of the forest.

(*The Two Paths* Lecture IV.)

## Restoration

Neither by the public nor by those who have the care of public monuments is the true meaning of the word *restoration* understood. It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer—a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered—a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed. Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter—it is *impossible* as impossible

as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture. That which I have above insisted upon as the life of the whole, that spirit which is given only by the hand and eye of the workman, can never be recalled. Another spirit may be given by another time, and it is then a new building ; but the spirit of the dead workman cannot be summoned up, and commanded to direct other hands, and other thoughts. And as for direct and simple copying, it is palpably impossible. What copying can there be of surfaces that have been worn half an inch down ? The whole finish of the work was in the half-inch that is gone ; if you attempt to restore that finish, you do it conjecturally ; if you copy what is left, granting fidelity to be possible (and what care, or watchfulness, or cost can secure it), how is the new work better than the old ? There was yet in the old *some* life, some mysterious suggestion of what it had been, and of what it had lost ; some sweetness in the gentle lines which rain and sun had wrought. There can be none in the brute hardness of the new carving. . . .

Do not let us talk then of restoration. The thing is a Lie from beginning to end. You may make a model of a building as you may of a corpse, and your model may have the shell of the old walls within it as your cast might have the skeleton, with what advantage I neither see nor care : but the old building is destroyed, and that more totally and mercilessly than if it had sunk into a mass of clay : more has been gleaned out of desolated Nineveh than ever will be out of rebuilt Milan. But, it is said, there may come a necessity for restoration ! Granted. Look the necessity full in the face, and understand it on its own terms. It is a necessity for destruction. Accept it as such, pull the building down, throw its stones into neglected corners, make ballast of them, or mortar, if you will ; but do it honestly, and do not set up a Lie in their

place. And look that necessity in the face before it comes and you may prevent it. The principle of modern times (a principle which I believe at least in France to be systematically acted on by the masons in order to find themselves work as the abbey of St. Ouen was pulled down by the magistrates of the town by the way of giving work to some vagrants) is to neglect buildings first and restore them afterwards. Take proper care of your monuments and you will not need to restore them. A few sheets of lead put in time upon a roof a few dead leaves and sticks swept in time out of a water-course will save both roof and walls from ruin. Watch an old building with an anxious care guard it as best you may, and at any cost from every influence of dilapidation. Count its stones as you would jewels of a crown set watches about it as if at the gates of a besieged city, bind it together with iron where it loosens stay it with timber where it declines do not care about the unsightliness of the aid better a crutch than a lost limb and do this tenderly and reverently and continually and many a generation will still be born and pass away beneath its shadow. Its evil day must come at last but let it come declaredly and openly, and let no dishonouring and false substitute deprive it of the funeral offices of memory.

(*Seven Lamps of Architecture* VI The  
Lamp of Memory )

## PASSAGES, MAINLY ARGUMENTATIVE, ON POLITICAL ECONOMY AND SOCIAL REFORM

### What is Political Economy ?

POLITICAL economy (the economy of a State, or of citizens) consists simply in the production, preservation, and distribution, at fittest time and place, of useful and pleasurable things. The farmer who cuts his hay at the right time ; the shipwright who drives his bolts well home in sound wood ; the builder who lays good bricks in well-tempered mortar ; the housewife who takes care of her furniture in the parlour, and guards against all waste in her kitchen ; the singer who rightly disciplines, and never overstrains her voice, are all political economists in the true and final sense : adding continually to the riches and well-being of the nation to which they belong.

But mercantile economy, the economy of "merces" or of "pay," signifies the accumulation, in the hands of individuals, of legal or moral claim upon, or power over, the labour of others ; every such claim implying precisely as much poverty or debt on one side, as it implies riches or right on the other. . . .

Now, the establishment of such inequality cannot be shown in the abstract to be either advantageous or disadvantageous to the body of the nation. . . . For the eternal and inevitable law in this matter is, that

the beneficialness of the inequality depends first on the methods by which it was accomplished and secondly on the purposes to which it is applied

It is impossible to conclude of any given mass of acquired wealth merely by the fact of its existence whether it signifies good or evil to the nation in the midst of which it exists Its real value depends on the moral sign attached to it just as sternly as that of a mathematical quantity depends on the algebraical sign attached to it Any given accumulation of commercial wealth may be indicative on the one hand of faithful industries progressive energies and productive ingenuities or on the other it may be indicative of mortal luxury merciless tyranny ruinous chicanerie Some treasures are heavy with human tears as an ill stored harvest with untimely rain and some gold is brighter in sunshine than it is in substance

One mass of money is the outcome of action which has created—another of action which has annihilated—ten times as much in the gathering of it such and such strong hands have been paralysed as if they had been numbed by nightshade so many strong men's courage broken so many productive operations hindered this and the other false direction given to labour and lying image of prosperity set up on Dura plains\* dug into seven times heated furnaces That which seems to be wealth may in verity be only the gilded index of far reaching ruin a wrecker's handful of coin gleaned from the beach to which he has beguiled an argosy a camp-follower's bundle of rags unwrapped from the breasts of goodly soldiers dead the purchase pieces of potter's fields wherein shall be buried together the citizen and the stranger †

And therefore the idea that directions can be given for the gaining of wealth irrespectively of the con

\* Dan lii 1

† Matt xxiv 6 7

sideration of its moral sources, or that any general and technical law of purchase and gain can be set down for national practice, is perhaps the most insolently futile of all that ever beguiled men through their vices. So far as I know, there is not in history record of anything so disgraceful to the human intellect as the modern idea that the commercial text, "Buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest," represents, or under any circumstances could represent, an available principle of national economy. Buy in the cheapest market?—yes; but what made your market cheap? Charcoal may be cheap among your roof timbers after a fire, and bricks may be cheap in your streets after an earthquake; but fire and earthquake may not therefore be national benefits. Sell in the dearest?—yes, truly; but what made your market dear? You sold your bread well to-day: was it to a dying man who gave his last coin for it, and will never need bread more; or to a rich man who to-morrow will buy your farm over your head; or to a soldier on his way to pillage the bank in which you have put your fortune?

None of these things you can know. One thing only can you know: namely, whether this dealing of yours is a just and faithful one, which is all you need concern yourself about respecting it; sure thus to have done your own part in bringing about ultimately in the world a state of things which will not issue in pillage or in death.

(*Unto this Last*, II.)

## What is Wealth?

"To be wealthy," says Mr. Mill, "is to have a large stock of useful articles." \*

\* John Stuart Mill (1806-73). The phrase quoted by Ruskin is in Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*.



I accept this definition. Only let us perfectly understand it.

We have therefore to ascertain in the above definition first what is the meaning of 'having' or the nature of Possession. Then what is the meaning of 'useful' or the nature of Utility.

And first of possession. At the crossing of the transepts of Milan Cathedral has lain for three hundred years the embalmed body of St Carlo Borromeo. It holds a golden crosier and has a cross of emeralds on its breast. Admitting the crosier and emeralds to be useful articles, is the body to be considered as having them? Do they in the politico-economical sense of property belong to it? If not and if we may therefore conclude generally that a dead body cannot possess property, what degree and period of animation in the body will render possession possible?

As thus: lately in a wreck of a Californian ship one of the passengers fastened a belt about him with two hundred pounds of gold in it, with which he was found afterwards at the bottom. Now as he was sinking—had he the gold? or had the gold him?

And if instead of sinking him in the sea by its weight the gold had struck him on the forehead and thereby caused incurable disease—suppose palsy or insanity—would the gold in that case have been more a possession than in the first? Without pressing the inquiry up through instances of gradually increasing vital power over the gold (which I will however give if they are asked for) I presume the reader will see that possession or 'having' is not an absolute but a gradated power and consists not only in the quantity or nature of the thing possessed but also (and in a greater degree) in its suitableness to the person possessing it and in his vital power to use it.

And our definition of wealth expanded becomes  
'The possession of useful articles which we can use.'

This is a very serious change. For wealth, instead of depending merely on a "have," is thus seen to depend on a "can." . . .

So much for our verb. Next for our adjective. What is the meaning of "useful" ?

The inquiry is closely connected with the last. For what is capable of use, in the hands of some persons, is capable, in the hands of others, of the opposite of use, called commonly "from-use," or "ab-use." And it depends on the person much more than on the article, whether its usefulness or ab-usefulness will be the quality developed in it. . . . Hence it follows that if a thing is to be useful, it must be not only of an availing nature, but in availing hands. . . .

Wealth, therefore, is "THE POSSESSION OF THE VALUABLE BY THE VALIANT" ; and in considering it as a power existing in a nation, the two elements, the value of the thing, and the valour of its possessor, must be estimated together.

*(Unto this Last, IV.)*

## Rich and Poor

I think you would feel somewhat uneasy and as if I were not treating my subject honestly, or speaking from my heart, if I proceeded in my lecture under the supposition that all rich people were idle. You would be both unjust and unwise if you allowed me to say that ;—not less unjust than the rich people, who say that all the poor are idle, and will never work if they can help it, or more than they can help.

For indeed the fact is, that there are idle poor, and idle rich. Many a beggar is as lazy as if he had ten thousand a year ; and many a man of large fortune is busier than his errand-boy, and never would think of stopping in the street to play marbles. So that, in a large view, the distinction between workers and idlers,

as between honest men and knaves runs through the very heart and innermost nature of men of all ranks and in all positions. There is a working class—strong and happy—among both rich and poor. There is an idle class—weak, wicked and miserable—among both rich and poor. And the worst of the misunderstandings arising between the two orders come of the unlucky fact that the wise of one class (how little wise in this!) habitually contemplate the foolish of the *other*. If the busy rich people watched and rebuked the idle rich people all would be right among *them* and if the busy poor people watched and rebuked the idle poor people all would be right among *them*. But each look for the faults of the other. A hard working man of property is particularly offended by an idle beggar and an orderly but poor workman is naturally intolerant of the licentious luxury of the rich. And what is severe judgment in the minds of the just men of either class becomes fierce enmity in the unjust—but among the unjust *only*. None but the dissolute among the poor look upon the rich as their natural enemies or desire to pillage their houses and their property. None but the dissolute among the rich speak in opprobrious terms of the vices and follies of the poor.

Now this distinction between rich and poor rests on two bases. Within its proper limits on a basis which is lawful and everlastingly necessary beyond them on a basis unlawful and everlastingly corrupting the frame work of society. The lawful basis of wealth is that a man who works should be paid the fair value of his work and that if he does not choose to spend it to-day he should have free leave to keep it and spend it to-morrow. Thus an industrious man working daily and laying by daily attains at last the possession of an accumulated sum of wealth to which he has absolute right. The idle person who will not

work, and the wasteful person who lays nothing by, at the end of the same time will be doubly poor—poor in possession, and dissolute in moral habit; and he will then naturally covet the money which the other has saved. And if he is then allowed to attack the other, and rob him of his well-earned wealth, there is no more any motive for saving, or any reward for good conduct; and all society is thereupon dissolved, or exists only in systems of rapine. Therefore the first necessity of social life is the clearness of national conscience in enforcing the law—that he should keep who has *justly earned*.

(*Crown of Wild Olive*, I.)

## What is Wise Work ?

There are three tests of wise work :—that it must be honest, useful, and cheerful.

I. It is HONEST. I hardly know anything more strange than that you recognize honesty in play, and you do not in work. In your lightest games, you have always some one to see what you call fair-play. In boxing, you must hit fair; in racing, start fair. Your English watchword is "*fair-play*," your English hatred, *foul-play*. Did it never strike you that you wanted another watchword also, "*fair-work*," and another and bitterer hatred,—"*foul-work*" ? Your prize-fighter has some honour in him yet : and so have the men in the ring round him : they will judge him to lose the match, by foul hitting. But your prize-merchant gains his match by foul selling, and no one cries out against that ! You drive a gambler out of the gambling-room who loads dice, but you leave a tradesman in flourishing business, who loads scales ! For observe, all dishonest dealing is loading scales. What difference does it make whether I get short

weight adulterate substance or dishonest fabric—unless that flaw in the substance or fabric is the worse evil of the two? Give me short measure of food and I only lose by you—but give me adulterate food and I die by you.

Here then is your chief duty you workmen and tradesmen to be true to yourselves and to us who would help you. We can do nothing for you nor you for yourselves without honesty. Get that you get all without that your suffrages your reforms your free trade measures your institutions of science are all in vain. It is useless to put your heads together if you can't put your hearts together. Shoulder to shoulder right hand to right hand among yourselves and no wrong hand to anybody else and you'll win the world yet.

II Then secondly wise work is USEFUL. No man minds or ought to mind its being hard if only it comes to something—but when it is hard and comes to nothing when all our bees business turns to spider's and for honeycomb we have only resultant cobweb blown away by the next breeze—that is the cruel thing for the worker. Yet do we ever ask ourselves personally or even nationally whether our work is coming to anything or not? We don't care to keep what has been nobly done still less do we care to do nobly what others would keep and least of all to make the work itself useful instead of deadly to the doer so as to exert his life indeed but not to waste it. Of all wastes the greatest waste you can commit is the waste of labour. If you went down in the morning into your dairy and found that your youngest child had got down before you and that he and the cat were at play together and that he had poured out all the cream on the floor for the cat to lap up you would scold the child and be sorry the cream was wasted. But if instead of wooden bowls with milk in them there are golden bowls with human life

in them ; \* and instead of the cat to play with,—the devil to play with ; and you yourself the player ; and instead of leaving that golden bowl to be broken by God at the fountain, you break it in the dust yourself, and pour the human life out on the ground for the fiend to lick up—that is no waste !

What ! you perhaps think, “ to waste the labour of men is not to kill them.” Is it not ? I should like to know how you could kill them more utterly,—kill them with second deaths, seventh deaths, hundred-fold deaths ? It is the slightest way of killing to stop a man’s breath. Nay, the hunger, and the cold, and the whistling bullets—our love messengers between nation and nation,—have brought pleasant messages to many a man before now : orders of sweet release, and leave at last to go where he will be most welcome and most happy. At the worst you do but shorten his life, you do not corrupt his life. But if you put him to base labour, if you bind his thoughts, if you blind his eyes, if you blunt his hopes, if you steal his joys, if you stunt his body, and blast his soul, and at last leave him not so much as strength to reap the poor fruit of his degradation, but gather that for yourself, and dismiss him to the grave, when you have done with him, having, as far as in you lay, made the walls of that grave everlasting (though, indeed, I fancy the goodly brick of some of our family vaults will hold closer in the resurrection day than the sod over the labourer’s head), this you think is no waste, and no sin !

III. Then, lastly, wise work is CHEERFUL, as a child’s work is. . . . Putting its trust in its father, it is careful for nothing—being full of love to every creature, it is happy always, whether in its play or its duty. Well, that’s the great worker’s character also. Taking no thought for the morrow ; taking thought only for the

duty of the day, trusting somebody else to take care of to-morrow, knowing indeed what labour is, but not what sorrow is, and always ready for play—beautiful play. For lovely human play is like the play of the Sun. There's a worker for you. He, steady to his time, is set as a strong man to run his course, but also he *rejoiceth* as a strong man to run his course. See how he plays in the morning, with the mists below, and the clouds above, with a ray here, and a flash there, and a shower of jewels everywhere,—that's the Sun's play. And great human play is like his—all various—all full of light and life, and tender as the dew of the morning.

(*Crown of Wild Olive*, I.)

## The Ends of Labour

I have hitherto spoken of all labour as profitable; because it is impossible to consider under one head the quality or value of labour and its aim. But labour of the best quality may be various in aim. It may be either constructive ('gathering,' from con and struo), as agriculture, nugatory, as jewel-cutting, or destructive ('scattering,' from de and struo), as war. It is not, however, always easy to prove labour, apparently nugatory, to be actually so, generally, the formula holds good, "he that gathereth not, scattereth."

Labour being thus various in its result, the prosperity of any nation is in exact proportion to the quantity of labour which it spends in obtaining and employing means of life.

THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings, that man

is richest, who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.

(*Unto this Last*, IV)

## How Wages are unjustly affected by Unchecked Competition

Money payment . . . consists radically in a promise to some person working for us, that for the time and labour he spends in our service to-day we will give or procure equivalent time and labour in his service at any future time when he may demand it

If we promise to give him less labour than he has given us, we underpay him. If we promise to give him more labour than he has given us, we overpay him. In practice, according to the laws of demand and supply, when two men are ready to do the work, and only one man wants to have it done, the two men underbid each other for it; and the one who gets it to do is underpaid. But when two men want the work done, and there is only one man ready to do it, the two men who want it done overbid each other, and the workman is overpaid. . .

The justice consists in absolute exchange; or, if there be any respect to the stations of the parties, it will not be in favour of the employer: there is certainly no equitable reason in a man's being poor, that if he give me a pound of bread to-day, I should return him less than a pound of bread to-morrow; or any equitable reason in a man's being uneducated, that if he uses a certain quantity of skill and knowledge in my service, I should use a less quantity of skill and knowledge in his. Perhaps, ultimately, it may appear desirable, or, to say the least, gracious, that I should



give in return somewhat more than I received. But at present we are concerned on the law of justice only which is that of perfect and accurate exchange—one circumstance only interfering with the simplicity of this radical idea of just payment—that inasmuch as labour (rightly directed) is fruitful just as seed is the fruit (or interest as it is called) of the labour first given or advanced ought to be taken into account and balanced by an additional quantity of labour in the subsequent repayment. Supposing the repayment to take place at the end of the year or of any other given time this calculation could be approximately made but as money (that is to say cash) payment involves no reference to time (it being optional with the person paid to spend what he receives at once or after any number of years) we can only assume generally that some slight advantage must in equity be allowed to the person who advances the labour so that the typical form of bargain will be —If you give me an hour to-day I will give you an hour and five minutes on demand. If you give me a pound of bread to-day I will give you seventeen ounces on demand and so on. All that is necessary for the reader to note is that the amount returned is at least in equity not to be *less* than the amount given.

And this equity of justice of payment is observe wholly independent of any reference to the number of men who are willing to do the work. I want a horse-shoe for my horse. Twenty smiths or twenty thousand smiths may be ready to forge it their number does not in one atom's weight affect the question of the equitable payment of the one who *does* forge it. It costs him a quarter of an hour of his life and so much skill and strength of arm to make that horse shoe for me. Then at some future time I am bound in equity to give a quarter of an hour and some minutes more of my life (or of some other person's at my dis-

posal), and also as much strength of arm and skill, and a little more, in making or doing what the smith may have need of.

(*Unto this Last, III*)

## A Parable from Nature—Co-operation versus Competition

The highest and first law of the universe—and the other name of life is, therefore, "help" The other name of death is "separation." Government and co-operation are in all things and eternally the laws of life. Anarchy and competition, eternally, and in all things, the laws of death.

Perhaps the best, though the most familiar example we could take of the nature and power of consistence, will be that of the possible changes in the dust we tread on.

Exclusive of animal decay, we can hardly arrive at a more absolute type of impurity than the mud or slime of a damp, over-trodden path, in the outskirts of a manufacturing town. I do not say mud of the road, because that is mixed with animal refuse; but take merely an ounce or two of the blackest slime of a beaten footpath on a rainy day, near a large manufacturing town.

That slime we shall find in most cases composed of clay (or brick dust, which is burnt clay) mixed with soot, a little sand, and water. All these elements are at helpless war with each other, and destroy reciprocally each other's nature and power, competing and fighting for place at every tread of your foot;—sand squeezing out clay, and clay squeezing out water, and soot meddling everywhere and defiling the whole. Let us suppose that this ounce of mud is left in perfect rest, and that its elements gather together,

like to like so that their atoms may get into the closest relations possible

Let the clay begin Ridding itself of all foreign substance it gradually becomes a white earth already very beautiful and fit with help of congealing fire to be made into finest porcelain and painted on and be kept in king's palaces But such artificial consistence is not its best Leave it still quiet to follow its own instinct of unity and it becomes not only white but clear not only clear but hard not only clear and hard but so set that it can deal with light in a wonderful way and gather out of it the loveliest blue rays only refusing the rest We call it then a sapphire

Such being the consummation of clay we give similar permission of quiet to the sand It also becomes first a white earth then proceeds to grow clear and hard and at last arranges itself in mysterious infinitely fine parallel lines which have the power of reflecting not merely the blue rays but the blue green purple and red rays in the greatest beauty in which they can be seen through any hard material whatsoever We call it then an opal

In next order the soot sets to work it cannot make itself white at first but instead of being discouraged tries harder and harder and comes out clear at last and the hardest thing in the world and for the blackness that it had obtains in exchange the power of reflecting all the rays of the sun at once in the vividest blaze that any solid thing can shoot We call it then a diamond

Last of all the water purifies or unites itself contented enough if it only reach the form of a dew drop but if we persist on its proceeding to a more perfect consistence it crystallizes into the shape of a star

And for the ounce of slime which we had by political economy of competition we have by political econ

omy of co-operation, a sapphire, an opal, and a diamond, set in the midst of a star of snow.

(*Modern Painters*, Vol. V. Pt. viii. chap. 1.)

## The Functions of a True Merchant

Now, there can be no question but that the tact, foresight, decision, and other mental powers, required for the successful management of a large mercantile concern, if not such as could be compared with those of a great lawyer, general, or divine, would at least match the general conditions of mind required in the subordinate officers of a ship, or of a regiment, or in the curate of a country parish. If, therefore, all the efficient members of the so-called liberal professions are still, somehow, in public estimate of honour, preferred before the head of a commercial firm, the reason must lie deeper than in the measurement of their several powers of mind.

And the essential reasons of such preference will be found to lie in the fact that the merchant is presumed to act always selfishly. His work may be very necessary to the community ; but the motive of it is understood to be wholly personal. The merchant's first object in all his dealings must be (the public believe) to get as much for himself, and leave as little to his neighbour (or customer) as possible. . . .

The fact is, that people never have had clearly explained to them the true functions of a merchant with respect to other people. I should like the reader to be very clear about this.

Five great intellectual professions, relating to daily necessities of life, have hitherto existed—three exist necessarily, in every civilized nation :

The Soldier's profession is to *defend* it.

The Pastor's to *teach* it.

The Physician's to *keep it in health*

The Lawyer's to *enforce justice* in it

The Merchant's to *provide* for it

And the duty of all these men is, on due occasion,  
to *die* for it

On due occasion—namely

The Soldier rather than leave his post in battle

The Physician rather than leave his post in plague

The Pastor rather than teach falsehood.

The Lawyer rather than countenance Injustice

The Merchant—what is his 'due occasion' of  
death?

It is the main question for the merchant as for all  
of us. I or truly the man who does not know when  
to die does not know how to live

Observe the merchant's function (or manufacturer's for in the broad sense in which it is here  
used the word must be understood to include both)  
is to provide for the nation. It is no more his function  
to get profit for himself out of that provision  
than it is a clergyman's function to get his stipend.  
Thus stipend is a due and necessary adjunct but not  
the object of his life if he be a true clergyman any  
more than his fee (or honorarium) is the object of life  
to a true physician. Neither is his fee the object of  
his life to a true merchant. All three if true men  
have a work to be done irrespective of fee—to be done  
even at any cost or for quite the contrary of fee,  
the pastor's function being to teach the physician's  
to heal and the merchant's as I have said to provide.  
That is to say he has to understand to their very root  
the qualities of the thing he deals in and the means  
of obtaining or producing it, and he has to apply all  
his sagacity and energy to the producing or obtaining  
it in perfect state and distributing it at the cheapest  
possible price where it is most needed

And because the production or obtaining of any  
commodity involves necessarily the agency of many

lives and hands, the merchant becomes in the course of his business the master and governor of large masses of men in a more direct, though less confessed way, than a military officer or pastor; so that on him falls, in great part, the responsibility for the kind of life they lead: and it becomes his duty, not only to be always considering how to produce what he sells, in the purest and cheapest forms, but how to make the various employments involved in the production, or transference of it, most beneficial to the men employed.

And as into these two functions, requiring for their right exercise the highest intelligence, as well as patience, kindness, and tact, the merchant is bound to put all his energy, so for their just discharge he is bound, as soldier or physician is bound, to give up, if need be, his life, in such way as it may be demanded of him. Two main points he has in his providing function to maintain: first, his engagements (faithfulness to engagements being the real root of all possibilities, in commerce); and, secondly, the perfectness and purity of the thing provided; so that, rather than fail in any engagement, or consent to any deterioration, adulteration, or unjust and exorbitant price of that which he provides, he is bound to meet fearlessly any form of distress, poverty, or labour, which may, through maintenance of these points, come upon him.

Again: in his office as governor of the men employed by him, the merchant or manufacturer is invested with a distinctly paternal authority and responsibility. In most cases, a youth entering a commercial establishment is withdrawn altogether from home influence; his master must become his father, or else he has, for practical and constant help, no father at hand: in all cases the master's authority, together with the general tone and atmosphere of his business, and the character of the men with whom the

youth is compelled in the course of it to associate have more immediate and pressing weight than the home influence and will usually neutralize it either for good or evil so that the only means which the master has of doing justice to the men employed by him is to ask himself sternly whether he is dealing with such subordinate as he would with his own son if compelled by circumstances to take such a position.

Supposing the captain of a frigate saw it right or were by any chance obliged to place his own son in the position of a common sailor as he would then treat his son he is bound always to treat every one of the men under him. So also supposing the master of a manufactory saw it right or were by any chance obliged to place his son in the position of an ordinary workman as he would then treat his son he is bound always to treat every one of his men. This is the only effective true or practical *rule* which can be given on this point of political economy.

And as the captain of a ship is bound to be the last man to leave his ship in case of wreck and to share his last crust with the sailors in case of famine so the manufacturer in any commercial crisis or distress is bound to take the suffering of it with his men and even to take more of it for himself than he allows his men to feel as a father would in a famine shipwreck or battle sacrifice himself for his son.

*(Unto this Last I)*

## Liberty and Restraint

You hear every day greater numbers of foolish people speaking about liberty as if it were such an honourable thing so far from being that it is on the whole and in the broadest sense dishonourable and an attribute of the lower creatures. No human being

however great, or powerful, was ever so free as a fish. There is always something that he must, or must not do ; while the fish may do whatever he likes. All the kingdoms of the world put together are not half so large as the sea, and all the railroads and wheels that ever were, or will be, invented are not so easy as fins. You will find on thinking of it, that it is his Restraint which is honourable to man, not his Liberty ; and, what is more, it is restraint which is honourable even in the lower animals. A butterfly is much more free than a bee ; but you honour the bee more, just because it is subject to certain laws which fit it for orderly function in bee society. And throughout the world, of the two abstract things, liberty and restraint, restraint is always the more honourable. It is true, indeed, that in these and all other matters you never can reason finally from the abstraction, for both liberty and restraint are good when they are nobly chosen, and both are bad when they are basely chosen ; but of the two, I repeat, it is restraint which characterizes the higher creature, and betters the lower creature.

*(The Two Paths, Lecture V.)*

## The House-fly and the Dog

I believe we can nowhere find a better type of a perfectly free creature than in the common house-fly. Nor free only, but brave ; and irreverent to a degree which I think no human republican could by any philosophy exalt himself to. There is no courtesy in him ; he does not care whether it is king or clown whom he teases ; and in every step of his swift mechanical march, and in every pause of his resolute observation, there is one and the same expression of perfect egotism, perfect independence and self-confidence, and conviction of the world's having been made for flies. Strike



at him with your hand—and to him the mechanical fact and external aspect of the matter is what to you it would be if an acre of red clay ten feet thick tore itself from the ground in one massive field hovered over you in the air for a second—and came crashing down with an aim. That is the external aspect of it, the inner aspect to his fly's mind is of a quite natural and unimportant occurrence—one of the momentary conditions of his active life. He steps out of the way of your hand and alights on the back of it. You can not terrify him nor govern him nor persuade him nor convince him. He has his own positive opinion on all matters—not an unwise one usually—for his own ends—and will ask no advice of yours. He has no work to do—no tyrannical instinct to obey. The earthworm has his digging—the bee her gathering and building—the spider her cunning net work—the ant her treasury and accounts. All these are comparatively slaves or people of vulgar business. But your fly free in the air free in the chamber—a black incarnation of caprice—wandering investigating flitting flirting feasting at his will with rich variety of choice in feast from the heaped sweets in the grocer's window to those of the butcher's back-yard and from the galled place on your crib horse's back to the brown spot in the road from which as the hoof disturbs him he rises with angry republican buzz—what freedom is like his?

For captivity again perhaps your poor watch-dog is as sorrowful a type as you will easily find. Mine certainly is. The day is lovely but I must write this and cannot go out with him. He is chained in the yard because I do not like dogs in rooms and the gardener does not like dogs in gardens. He has no books—nothing but his own weary thoughts for company—and a group of those free flies whom he snaps at with sudden ill success. Such dim hope as he may have that I may yet take him out with me

will be, hour by hour, wearily disappointed ; or, worse, darkened at once into leaden despair by an authoritative " No "—too well understood. His fidelity only seals his fate ; if he would not watch for me, he would be sent away, and go hunting with some happier master ; but he watches, and is wise, and faithful, and miserable : and his high animal intellect only gives him the wistful powers of wonder, and sorrow, and desire, and affection, which embitter his captivity. Yet of the two, would we rather be a watch-dog, or a fly ?

(*The Cestus of Aglaia*, chap. 6.)

## On Education

Educate, or govern, they are one and the same word. Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know. It means teaching them to behave as they do not behave. And the true " compulsory education " which the people now ask of you is not catechism, but drill. It is not teaching the youth of England the shapes of letters and the tricks of numbers ; and then leaving them to turn their arithmetic to roguery, and their literature to lust. It is, on the contrary, training them into the perfect exercise and kingly continence of their bodies and souls. It is a painful, continual, and difficult work ; to be done by kindness, by watching, by warning, by precept, and by praise,—but above all—by example.

Compulsory ! Yes, by all means ! " Go ye out into the highways and hedges, and *compel* them to come in." Compulsory ! Yes, and gratis also. *Dei Gratia*, they must be taught, as, *Dei Gratia*, you are set to teach them. I hear strange talk continually, " how difficult it is to make people pay for being educated ! " Why, I should think so ! Do you make your children

pay for their education or do you give it them compulſorily and gratis? You do not expect *them* to pay you for their teaching except by becoming good children. Why ſhould you expect a peasant to pay for his except by becoming a good man?—payment enough I think if we knew it. Payment enough to himſelf as to us. For that is another of our grand popular miſtakes—people are always thinking of education as a means of livelihood. Education is not a profitable buſineſs but a coſtly one. Nay even the beſt attainments of it are always unprofitable in any terms of coin. No nation ever made its bread either by its great arts or its great wiſdoms. By its minor arts or manufactures by its practical knowledges yes, but its noble ſcholarſhip its noble philoſophy and its noble art are always to be bought as a treaſure, not ſold for a livelihood. You do not learn that you may live—you live that you may learn. You are to ſpend on National Education and to be ſpent for it, and to make by it not more money but better men—to get into this British Iſland the greateſt poſſible number of good and brave Engliſhmen. *They* are to be your money's worth.

(*Crown of Wild Olive IV*)

## A Plea for the Preservation of Natural Beauty

There was a rocky valley between Buxton and Bakewell once upon a time divine as the Vale of Tempe you might have ſeen the Gods there morning and evening—Apollo and all the ſweet Muſes of the light—walking in fair proceſſion on the lawns of it and to and fro among the pinnacles of its crags. You cared neither for Gods nor grass but for caſh (which you did not know the way to get) you thought you could get

it by what the *Times* calls "Railroad Enterprise." You Enterprised a Railroad through the valley—you blasted its rocks away, heaped thousands of tons of shale into its lovely stream. The valley is gone and the Gods with it; and now, every fool in Buxton can be at Bakewell in half-an-hour, and every fool in Bakewell at Buxton; which you think a lucrative process of exchange—you Fools Everywhere.

(*Fors Clavigera*, Letter 5.)

All real and wholesome enjoyments possible to man have been just as possible to him, since first he was made on the earth, as they are now; and they are possible to him chiefly in peace. To watch the corn grow, and the blossom set; to draw hard breath over ploughshare or spade; to read, to think, to love, to hope, to pray—These are the things that make man happy. . . . And I am Utopian and enthusiastic enough to believe that the time will come when the world will discover this. It has now made its experiments in every possible direction but the right one: and it seems that it must, at last, try the right one, in a mathematical necessity. It has tried fighting, and preaching, and fasting, and buying and selling, pomp and parsimony, pride and humiliation—every possible manner of existence in which it could conjecture there was any happiness or dignity: and all the while, as it bought, sold, and fought, and fasted, and wearied itself with policies, and ambitions, and self-denials, God had placed its real happiness in the keeping of the little mosses of the wayside, and of the clouds of the firmament.

(*Modern Painters*, Vol. III. chap. 17.)

So long as men live by bread, the far-away valleys must laugh as they are covered with the gold of God; and the shouts of His happy multitude ring round the

winepress and the well      No scene is continually and untiringly loved but one rich by joyful human labour    smooth in field    fair in garden    full in orchard    trim sweet and frequent in homestead    tinged with voices of vivid existence    No air is sweet that is silent    it is only sweet when full of low currents of under sound—triplets of birds and murmur and chirp of insects and deep-toned words of men and wayward trebles of childhood    As the art of life is learned it will be found at last that all lovely things are also necessary —the wild flower by the wayside as well as the tended corn    and the wild birds and creatures of the forest as well as the tended cattle because man doth not live by bread only but also by the desert manna    by every wondrous word and unknowable work of God

*(Unto this Last IV )*

THE END

*The "Teaching of English" Series*

*General Editor—SIR HENRY NEWFOLT*

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## A BOOK OF RUSKIN



RUSKIN AS A YOUNG MAN

*(From a pen drawing by  
E. Hebe Thompson)*

# A BOOK OF RUSKIN

COMPILED AND EDITED BY  
E. M. HEWETSON, B.A.

THOMAS NELSON & SONS, LTD.  
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## PREFACE

THE arrangement and, to some extent, the choice of extracts in this little book are the outcome of personal experience in introducing the works of Ruskin to schoolgirls between thirteen and sixteen years of age. For them, and doubtless for many older students also, the best method of approach is the biographical, and the medium, *Præterita*; for to read *Præterita*, that autobiography written "frankly, garrulously, and at ease," is to learn to love the author, while enjoying the full flavour of his literary gifts. Though not a novel, *Præterita* has many of the qualities which go to make a fine novel—narrative power and astonishingly vivid portraiture included. The severely Evangelical mother with strong opinions on the sinfulness of toys, the still more Evangelical aunt who allowed only cold mutton for Sunday's dinner, the indulgent father who told him stories after the process of shaving was safely accomplished, the old nurse who *would* put her mistress's cup on the wrong side of the little round table, the little Scotch cousin who competed with him in the Sunday evening Scripture examinations, and his Scotch aunt with her uncanny gift of second sight and her prophetic dreams—these, and many more, Ruskin makes us know as well as any of the characters who live for us in the pages of Thackeray and Dickens.

With *Præterita* should be read the "Letters," which, with their intimate self-revelation and style infinitely

varied to suit the mood of the moment are not only delightful reading in themselves but throw a valuable sidelight upon Ruskin's inner life and upon his relations with the outstanding personalities of his time, for Ruskin's correspondents included Alfred Tennyson Mr and Mrs Browning Thomas Carlyle Dr John Brown Henry Miss Mitford Mrs Gaskell Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his wife Edward Burne Jones Sir Oliver Lodge Cardinal Manning and many others whose names are familiar to all educated people.

The biographical sketch with which this little volume opens is intended to supply a framework into which the extracts may be fitted and to suggest some lines upon which more extensive reading may be pursued. Ruskin's relations with the men and movements of his age and the prominent part he himself took in its æsthetic and social activities make a fascinating study which is also a survey of the nineteenth century in many of its aspects.

E M H

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